

TRUTHS TO LIVE BY

‘ Give me a great truth that I may live on it.’

HERDER

‘ Poets are all who love, who feel great truths
And tell them : and the truth of truths is love.’

P. J. BAILEY, *Festus*

TRUTHS TO LIVE BY

A COMPANION TO

"Everyday Christian Life"

BY

FREDERIC W. FARRAR D.D. F.R.S.

*16th Fellow of Trinity College Cambridge Archdeacon
and Canon of Westminster Chaplain in
Ordinary to the Queen*

AUTHOR OF *THE LIFE OF CHRIST ETC.*

LONDON

WM. ISBISTER Limited

15 & 16 TAVISTOCK STREET COVENT GARDEN

1890

TO
GEORGE W. CHILDS, ESQ.,
OF PHILADELPHIA
KNOWN AND BELOVED ALIKE IN AMERICA AND ENGLAND
FOR HIS MUNIFICENT GENEROSITY,
AND
ENDEARED TO ME AND TO MANY BY ACTS OF GREAT
PERSONAL KINDNESS,

This little Book is Dedicated
WITH SINCERE AFFECTION AND RESPECT

iv

FREDERIC W. FARRAR.

PREFACE.

THIS little volume, like that on "Everyday Christian Life," to which it is a companion, may be described as consisting of simple pastoral sermons, not written with any view to publication, but addressed from week to week to a general congregation. The sermons differ from those in "Everyday Christian Life" because they are devoted almost exclusively to the exposition of doctrine, as the others were to the enforcement of practice, but it need hardly be said that as doctrinal teaching was not excluded from the former sermons, so practical exhortation is still a main object in these. They are an effort to make clear some of the most essential truths of the Christian faith in simple and untechnical

phraseology ; and with this end in view they set forth some main elements in the theology of St. John and of St. Paul. They are printed at the request of the publishers solely because the others were so favourably received, and were found by so many to be really helpful. In both divisions of the volume I have used all such helps as were open to me for my immediate purpose. In a work so entirely unpretending, it is not necessary, even if it were possible, to acknowledge every special obligation. I must content myself with the general remark that in the sermons on St. John I have been indebted to the treatise of Eric Haupt, who first taught me to enter with fuller comprehension into the meaning of the First Epistle ; to the beautiful writings of the Bishop of Derry ; and most of all to the masterly commentary of my friend and colleague at Westminster, Canon Westcott, to whom I have repeatedly referred. In those on St. Paul I have gained hints from many commentators, and perhaps especially from the " *Histoire de*

PREFACE.

. ix

la Théologie Chrétienne," by Edouard Reuss.
May He in whose name these sermons were
spoken pardon their numberless deficiencies,
and cause them to be blessed for the further-
ance of His Kingdom.

F. W. FARRAR.

ST. MARGARET'S RECTORY,

Feb. 24, 1890.

from } th

CONTENTS.

I AS TAUGHT BY ST. JOHN

I. JESUS CHRIST THE SON OF GOD, THE SOURCE	PAGE
OF LIFE	3
II. FELLOWSHIP AND JOY	16
III. THE NATURE OF GOD	31
IV. THE NATURE OF MAN	47
V. THE NATURE OF SIN	61
VI. THE DIVINE REMEDY FOR SIN	74
VII. CHRIST OUR ADVOCATE	92
III. TESTS OF THE EFFICACY OF REDEMPTION FOR	
OURSELVES	108
IX. THE SECOND TEST OF OUR KNOWING GOD	122
X. LOVE THE TRUE IMITATION OF CHRIST	138
VI. LOVE NOT THE WORLD	153
XII. ANTICHRIST OR, FALSE FORMS OF RELIGION	167
XIII. REALIZED SONSHIP	184
XIV. THE RESULTS OF THE SENSE OF SONSHIP	197

II AS TAUGHT BY ST. PAUL		PAGE
I	"ALL HAVE SINNED"	217
II	"WE HAVE SINNED"	233
III	THE FORGIVENESS OF PAST SINS	247
IV	CHRIST A RANSOM AND A PROPITIATION	260
V	THE LAW CANNOT GIVE LIFE	274
VI	"IN CHRIST" I	290
VII	"IN CHRIST" II	307
VIII	"IN CHRIST" III	3
IX	ST. PAUL'S THEOLOGY	3
X	THE IDEAL AND THE REAL IN CHRISTIANITY	

THREE CHRISTMAS CAROLS

IN THE FIELD WITH THEIR FLOCKS ABIDING
 IN SORROW AND IN WANT
 ALL GLORIOUS WITH ISAIAH AND HYMN

AN EASTER CAROL.

ON THE CROSS WE SAW HIM DYING

·1.

AS TAUGHT BY ST JOHN

ὁ δὲ διορατικώτερος.—S. CHRYSOST. *Hom. in Ioann.* lxxxvii.
ed. Montfaucon ; Paris, 1728 ; p. 522).

ἡ δὲ βοή . . ἀγωνιάτη . . ὅ, τοσούτων γέμονσα ἀπορρήτων
καὶ τόσαυτα κοιμίζονσα ἀγαθά.—*id.* *Hom.* i. p. 2.

I.

Jesus Christ the Son of God, the
Source of Life.

THE OBJECT OF THE GOSPEL.

"But these things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name."—JOHN XX. 31.

(Revised Version—and so throughout.)

THE duty of preaching, which haply some of you despise as a very light and easy one, is full of anxious responsibility. Our anxiety is not in the least to say what our hearers will admire; or what our critics will approve; or what will satisfy the curiosity of chance comers; or what may be characterized as interesting, or original, or up to the mark. Woe to the preacher whose thoughts in the matter are at all of self! Woe to him whose one care it is to give no offence! Woe to him who can stoop to improvise opinions for the sake of gain, or to cloak them out of desire for self-interest! Woe to him who is willing to

answer his people according to their idols, and not willing constantly to speak the truth, boldly to rebuke vice, and patiently to suffer for the truth's sake! I can imagine no calling more vulgar and more miserable than that of the preacher, if he has in view anything but the edification, the moral advance, the religious instruction, the spiritual awakening of his congregation. And, among many other dangers of egotism and unfaithfulness, he must be on his guard lest he fail rightly to divide the word of life. Who is sufficient for these things? And how many of you seriously ask God that He would teach those who are set to teach others? St. Paul said, "Brethren, pray for us." If even a Paul needed to make that request, how unspeakable a need is ours!

The Gospel and its lessons may be considered under numberless aspects, but they are all included under these two heads—lessons of doctrine, and lessons of practice. A teaching exclusively doctrinal might appeal only to the intellect, and only produce intolerant Pharisees, a teaching exclusively practical might be no better than a child's flower stuck into the sand, which has no root. Dogma and morality should never be dislinked from each other, for it is their perpetual connexion which constitutes one element in the unity of Scripture. Here, too, St. Paul sets us a consummate lesson. Nearly all

Epistles fall into two well-marked divisions; one in which he lays down the foundations of the truth; the other in which he builds the super-structure of moral exhortation. And why need I speak even of St. Paul? Is it not so, no less, in the teaching of Him who spake as never man spake? What were all His miracles but lessons taught in action? What were all His parables but eternal precepts, springing out of eternal truths?

As I shall try to bring before you some of the deep lessons taught by the first great missionary of Christ, the Apostle to the Gentiles, so now I wish to study with you some of the same, and of other lessons on which the bosom-disciple, the last aged survivor of the Apostles, characteristically dwells. Sermons which may be called doctrinal, may prove uninteresting to some hearers, and especially to those who care little or nothing for spiritual things. But it should not be the preacher's object either to interest or to excite. It is his duty, yea, necessity is laid upon him, to bid you think of solemn, simple fundamental truths; and it is to such truths that I shall ask you to listen with reverent and serious hearts.

I. The text which I have read to you—
These things have been written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing ye may have life through His

name—is an utterance so pregnant that I cannot pretend to do more than touch upon its wide significance. It is nothing less than St. John's own statement and summary of the object of his own Gospel. We read the Gospels : page by page, verse by verse, we profit by their Divine teachings ; but it is a blessed thing to have been told in one single verse the central intent why the last and most spiritual of them was written. That intent the Evangelist tells us was to produce in us a twofold conviction, and to enable us to enjoy the life which springs from its continuous power. The first conviction which he aims to form in us is that Jesus is the Christ ; the second, that Christ Jesus is the Son of God ; and the fruit of that twofold conviction is the eternal life which is inspired by such a faith.

1. St. John first desires to prove " that Jesus is the Christ."—" *Jesus*." Who can narrate all that that name has been, all that it is, to those who have known it ? " Jesus " is the subject of the four Gospels. Their one subject is the Life of Jesus. It is the Lord's human name ; the name by which His mother called Him, when He lay as an infant in the manger cradle, when He played as a little child on the cottage floor of Nazareth ; the name of Him who was the village carpenter ; the name of

Him who went to stray
 A pilgrim on the world's highway,
 Oppressed by power, and mocked by pride,
 The Nazarene, the Crucified.

As we utter it we recall the scenes in the Synagogue and the Temple ; the sermon on the hillside among the lilies of the field ; the boat stirred gently by the silver ripples of the lake ; the feeding of the multitudes as they sat in their many-coloured Eastern robes on the green grass ; the woman sobbing at His feet and wiping them with the hairs of her head at the banquet of the Pharisee ; the long night of prayer upon the lonely hill ; the life as an excommunicated fugitive with a price upon His head ; the madness of priests and scribes against the only human life ever lived of perfect love and sinless innocence ; the fury of the mob ; the last supper ; the disciple who became the traitor ; the agony in Gethsemane ; the cross ; the garden grave.

"*Jesus.*" The name means Saviour. He was a Saviour *by teaching*. How could we live in these days without all those words of His which are spirit and which are life ? Without those Beatitudes which divinely reversed all the world's estimates of what is good ? Without that last High-priestly prayer, so "rarely mixed of sorrows and joys, and studded with mysteries as with emeralds" ?

TRUTHS TO LIVE BY.

Jesus—He was the Saviour also *by example*. What ideal could we have if we had not Him, of whose life the life of the best of saints is but a feeble copy?

Jesus—He was the Saviour, also *by self-sacrifice*, even unto death. Who else could have taught us the lesson—so hard, so very hard to learn—that we must bear our cross, that he who would save his life must be ready to lose it amid the hatred and falsehood of the world?

Oh! what hallowed associations breathe about that name of Him whom we all so sorely need; of Him who was the friend of sinners; the healer of the leper; who took the little children in His arms, laid His hands upon them, and blessed them; and who, amid the execration of the world—sole reward for all His infinite compassion—hounded to cruel death by Jews and Gentiles, by Pharisees and Sadducees, by mobs and priests—died on the Cross of Calvary between two robbers! Died—but only that He might live, and rule, and intercede for us for evermore.

And the object of the Gospels was to teach us that this Jesus "*was the Christ*"—that is, the Anointed, the promised Messiah of the Jews. As He is the strength of all the present, so was He the fulfilment of all the past. God, who loved His human children unto the end, loved

them from the beginning. The Incarnation was no sudden thought ; no second-best plan. It was the consummation of that love of God of which He had not left Himself without witness from the foundation of the world. We have an Old Testament as well as a New Testament. We are one in hope, one in promise with all the forefathers of our race. When man fell, the promise was given ; when the Deluge came, it was renewed ; it was confirmed to Abraham and to his sons ; it gleamed through the thunder-smoke of Sinai ; it brightened the *De profundis* of the Jewish people in the Psalms ; it is the divinest tone in the grandest utterances of all the prophets. The object of the Evangelists to teach that Jesus is the Christ is to convince us that this Son of man was the promised seed of the woman who should bruise the serpent's head ; that He was the true rainbow of the Covenant ; that in Him were all the nations of the world to be blessed ; that He was the Prophet greater than Moses of whom Moses spoke ; that He was the true Star of Jacob, and Sceptre of Israel ; the King of David's line ; the branch of the stem of Jesse ; the oppressed and afflicted, but not for Himself ; the Priest upon His throne ; the Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. That Jesus is the Christ—the Prophet, Priest, and King of God's immutable promise—shows us that God has been from the first a God of

love; it says to us, with infinite consolation, "Oh, tarry thou the Lord's leisure, and He shall comfort thy heart. Put thou thy trust in the Lord."

2. But the Gospel was further written to teach us that Jesus, the Christ of the chosen people, was something far more stupendous and transcendent than this—even *the Son of God*; that the Christ of Israel was the Divine Saviour of the world. My friends, here is the mystery of all mysteries—the unsearchable depth of the riches of the love of God—in that, while we were yet sinners, He sent His Son to die for us. He who has apprehended this secret of the ages, needs no other wisdom. God became man, that man might be as God. Even so did God cast a bridge over the seemingly immeasurable abyss, which separates His infinitude from man's insignificance. He did so when He, who was in the form of God, made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant. If we do not know God in Christ we cannot know Him. "No man," He said, "cometh unto the Father but by me." Neither is there salvation in any other, for there is none other name under heaven whereby we can be saved. How shall we escape if we neglect this great salvation? Where shall we find help in time of need if we reject a Saviour who is all love; who is ever near; who lived,

and died, and rose again for us ; in whom alone we can obtain forgiveness for the sins of the past, or any strength in the present, or any hope and peace in the long days that are to come ?

II. Here, then, is the twofold conviction that the Gospel is meant to create in us : first, that Jesus is the Christ in whom were concentrated all man's hopes, since our parents passed weeping from the gates of the Paradise which they had lost ; and, secondly, that Jesus the Christ is the Son of God, in whom alone we can find access to God, reconciliation with God. And the object of the twofold conviction is (St. John tells us) that, believing, we may have life in His name.

i. "*Believing*"—not merely saying we believe. We do say this. We repeat the creeds. Alas ! has not the word "I believe" become the merest ghost of itself ? We believe—that is, we profess ; we do not deny ; we acquiesce in the statements. But oh ! do not take that for the belief to which life is promised. Do not look for any justification from a faith like that—a faith without works, which is dead, being alone. Thou believest that there is one God. Thou doest well. The devils also believe—and, more, they tremble. Do you ever tremble ? Your belief is but a painted belief, but the shadow and semblance of belief, if it be not that faith—that impelling, convincing, all-

absorbing faith—which moulds conduct, which leads to action. To be called a Christian is a very easy, commonplace thing: to be a Christian, oh! how hard it is! One fourth of mankind is nominally Christian; is one-thousandth part of mankind fully so. And if it were, would not the demons of evil, who distract and worry us, have long ago been swept into their abyss? When the Son of man cometh shall He find this faith upon the earth? Do we not all need to cry from the very dust, "Lord, increase our faith;" "Lord, I believe! help Thou mine unbelief"?

ii. But when we have this faith in its reality, what is its issue and reward? It is, that, believing, we *may have life through Christ's name*. "These things have I written unto you," St John says in his Epistle, "*that ye may know that ye have eternal life, even unto you that believe in the name of the Son of God*" Where faith is, there is life: where it is not, there is death. This metaphor of life and death runs all through Scripture from its first page to its last. Would that we grasped it! The busy scenes of guilty crowded cities; the rush and moil and care of business; the gaiety and fascination of what men call pleasure; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; the glamour of wealth, the fury of ambition, the gratified egotism of success—this is what men call "life."

Scripture scatters over it all the dust and ashes of the charnel-house. All this pageantry of power, and of men absorbed in their own selfishness, and madly bent on their own utter and not distant destruction—alas! to the eye of angels there is no glamour about it; and they see often in it but the glistening sepulchre, full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. The young man, full of conceit, bent on the lawless gratification of his own desires, goes as an ox to the slaughter, as a fool to the correction of the stocks. He sits at the lighted banquet of the prodigal; he sees there the

Flushed guests, and golden goblets foamed with wine, and he calls this "seeing life." It is not seeing life; it is feeding on ashes. It is not life, it is death; death in its hollowness; death in its anguish of retribution; death in its initiation; death in its issues; the death of the body in its pollution and corruption; the death of the soul in its paralysis and stupefaction; the death of the spirit in its extinction and obliteration. Tear off the painted masks; show him the white disease beneath. Alas! he knoweth not that the dead are there, and that her guests—and he among them, himself dead also—are in the depths of hell. Yea! without faith in God, and in His Christ, all life is a dance of death, in which that grinning skeleton, with his

fetter as yet—and only for a short while—unfelt, is dragging the rich, and the young, and the beautiful, and kings, and priests, and mighty men first to the cold and narrow grave;—and then comes what comes hereafter. It is death leading to death. But Christ is the life, and the eternal life; and He came that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. It is not only the death of the body which He has conquered. That which is terrible to the guilty and the worldling, is to the Christian only a step into the sunlight from the sun-illuminated tent; but He came to thrill new life into the spirit entombed in vice and vanity, into the soul dead in trespasses and sins. Let the dead, whether in this life or beyond, but once hear His voice, and they shall come forth, like Lazarus, though bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and shall shake from those contaminated cerements the dust of mortality.

Ah! my friends, do you know all this by experience? Do you know—as we are all meant to know—that in Christ we have eternal life? If you do—if you have passed from death unto life because you love the brethren—if you have indeed been born again of water and of the Spirit—then for you the object of the Gospel, the object of all life has been fulfilled. But if you know it not—if all these are idle words to you—if you take your death for

life, and the meek, suffering, faithful life in Christ for death—then the Voice still calls to you—(let us each pray to God that we may hear it; pray to God that it may not call to us in vain!)—"Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."

II.

Fellowship and Joy.

THE OBJECT OF ST. JOHN'S EPISTLE.

“That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you also, that ye also may have fellowship with us : yea, and our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ. And these things we write that our joy may be fulfilled.”—1 JOHN i. 3, 4.

THE object of St. John's Gospel was, as we have seen, that we may believe in Jesus; believe that He is our Saviour; believe that He is the Christ, the promised Messiah of the Jews, the central point of all God's past revelations; believe that He was the Son of God, the only link between our infinite unworthiness and the heaven which otherwise would have seemed so far away:—and that, believing this, not merely professing to believe it, we may have life through His name; life real and eternal, not

That earthly load

Of death, called life, which us from life doth sever.

Now, the First Epistle of St. John was probably sent to the Churches of Asia at

the same time with the Gospel, as its epilogue and enforcement. The Gospel begins with "the Word became flesh," for it treats of the Person through whom life came; the Epistle says that the Life was manifested, for its object is not only to set forth the Person, but the influences which flow to us from Him. And St. John states the object of the Epistle—which was probably the last word of recorded Scripture—in my text, and in the 13th verse of the 5th chapter. There he tells us that he has written "that we may know that we have eternal life"; here he tells us that his object in writing is, that we may have the two things which go to make up the fulness of that eternal life. Those two things are—fellowship and perfect joy.

1. The Gospel proclaimed for ever the infinite truth that God became man. The Apostles had seen Him; had heard the gracious words that proceeded out of His mouth; they had gazed upon Him; their hands had handled Him. The first object, therefore, of their writing was that we might have fellowship with them. The revelation was in nowise meant for them alone. God has no favourites. He did not give to the first disciples an infinitely exceptional privilege which He denied to the countless millions of mankind. Are we to regard them only as pre-eminently blessed?

Are we unspeakably less fortunate than they in that they lived with Jesus? My friends, have no horrors of despair, no hours of deep remorse, haply even of defiant misery come to you when you have cried out in your hearts, If I had but lived then! if I could but have known Him! if such a chance had but been given to me as was given to those beloved, how different all might then have been with me! If I could but have flung myself on my knees before Him like that young eager ruler! Oh, that I could even have wept, like that woman who was a sinner, upon His feet! No leper, no blind man would have implored His pity with such a passion of entreaty as I. If I could but speak to Him now for one poor half-hour; if I could but fly to Him as a friend, when all other friendship seems weaker than a broken reed; if when, all around me, the world seems to be slipping into dust and ashes, I could but grasp His hand for safety as Peter did when he began to sink in the tempestuous waves!—then indeed all would be well with me! I could rise victorious over all my ghostly enemies. Could I but see *Him*, all that is in the world, all its hollow pleasures, and all its braggart vaunt might go.

Oh, had I lived in that great day,
How had its glory new
Filled earth and heaven, and caught away.
My ravished spirit too!

There are times when such yearnings may seem natural to us, but they only show an imperfect and ill-instructed faith. It is not such bodily nearness to our Lord which could have been of the least help to us. Do not let us cheat ourselves as though we were ruined for lack of a "might have been." We are better off, not worse off, than the poor disciples of Galilee. Christ Himself said to them that His bodily absence meant only His nearer spiritual presence. "Because I have spoken these things unto you," He said, "sorrow hath filled your heart. Nevertheless, I tell you the truth. It is expedient for you that I go away; for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you." And did He not pronounce a distinct beatitude on those who have not seen, yet believe? If we think the Apostles so specially blessed, let us remember that the very object of their preaching, the one reason why the New Testament was written, was that we might have fellowship with them; that all which they had enjoyed might, in richer fulness of fruition, belong to all who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity and truth. This fellowship with them, and with all true Christians in Christ, this unity in love, is the essence of Christ's kingdom. A Christianity arrogant and exclusive—a Christianity factious and uncharitable—a Christianity which

loves to bristle with anathemas as with bayonets,—a Christianity which is tempted to rely on narrow external privileges and petty differences of distinction—a Christianity in which the heated partisans of clashing opinions can make no allowance and feel no brotherly consideration for each other,—ah, it may call itself this Church or that Church, or even *the* Church, but I fear it is little better than worldliness and heathendom, and is not made beautiful by its veneer of official sanctity! The day was when pagans said, “How these Christians love one another!” But already, in the fourth century, the Emperor Julian said, “These Christians hate one another more fiercely than the most savage wild beasts.” True Christians?—no! Nominal Christians?—yes. Professing Christians?—yes; but true Christians—no! For the test of Christianity is love, and the fruit of love is cordial fellowship, in which each, with noble humility, esteems others better than himself.

Christ is the same as He ever was. He is unchanged, yesterday, to-day, and for ever. He is as near to save and to help as when He drove the evil spirit from the demoniac boy; as when through the opening heavens Stephen saw Him standing on the right hand of God. If now we are one in heart with the world, or with unreal Christians, no less certainly should we then have yelled “Crucify Him” with the

brutal mob; or sold Him with Judas; or said with the Nazarenes, Is not this the carpenter? or with the Pharisees sneered at Him as He taught in the synagogue; or reviled Him with priests and elders as He hung upon the cross; or voted with Caiaphas in the Sanhedrin; or, with Pontius Pilate, have yielded to the multitude who knew Him not.

2. "That which we have seen and heard, announce we unto you, that ye may have fellowship with us." Yes, and that fellowship with Apostles and Evangelists springs from the two-fold root of a deeper fellowship; for St. John adds, "And truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ."

i. "Our fellowship is *with the Father*." Ah! if we could but grasp that one truth, how would all life be elevated and inspired! how would it cease to look dim, and mean, and not worth living! how would it catch and reflect the glory of its encircling heaven! For this fellowship is eternal life. Half the systems of human philosophy and religion have been devised to rear up some ladder, of endless rounds, between earth and heaven; to bridge, by some intermediate agencies, the fathomless cleft which seemed to separate man from God. There is but one ladder: it is the Son of man, on whom angels ascended and descended. There is but one bridge: it is that bridge of the Divine

Humanity, with its one vast span flung by God Himself over the immeasurable void. When we separate ourselves from God by wilful sin we may well despair; for then we are the most deplorable and miserable of all the creatures which God has made: but when we attain, as we may attain, to fellowship with Him, then we may feel that there is a grandeur in the beatings of the heart, for then life is immortality. And this fellowship with God, which lifts us up from the dust to enthrone us among the stars, also gives sanctity to the being of others. Just as we must often feel deep shame at our own unworthiness, so there is in human life an aspect so mean and ugly that at times we seem almost driven from our belief in, or honour for, all but the few among our fellow-men. At such times we turn from our brethren with weary alienation: blush for them and for ourselves. We feel a proud disgust, in which is mingled a large, and in itself not ignoble, scorn for all the intolerable paltriness and falsity—that infusion of the lower animals into the nature of man—which we cannot but observe in looking at the worldly and godless side of human nature. Belief in man, and hope for man, and love to man, are restored to us only by fellowship with God. Union with God is to our fallen nature what sunlight is to the dull and miry world: what a reflection of the blue

heaven is to some muddy wayside pool. Raised forgiven, loved, ennobled ourselves, we see our brother-men also in the light of that ideal and transforming splendour; we see them walking in an air of glory, redeemed and sanctified: we learn the meaning of those lines—

Glory to God from those whom men oppress;
Honour from God to those whom men despise!

Fellowship with the Father is only possible to us because it is possible to all; and that possibility is a thing so glorious that it exalts the whole nature of mankind into a redeemable and sacred thing.

ii. "*And with His Son Jesus Christ.*" Fellowship with God is not possible without fellowship with the man Christ Jesus. It is not a different fellowship, but one nearer, more tender, more capable of realization. In Christ we see a God whom we can imagine, whom we can know; who does not hide Himself; who has a face like our own face; who still wears the glorified body of humanity; who speaks to us in that still small voice, of which the accents stir our inmost souls. That Jesus, whose blessed feet walked by the lake of Galilee—that Christ of whom all the prophets prophesied—is God in the form of man, the God-man, who condescended for us men and for our salvation to be a living personal friend. Do not, I

entreat you, take this for a mere conventional formula, a mere theological phrase: it represents a reality wherein alone lies the secret of eternal life. Perhaps you will say you do not understand what is meant by "putting on Christ," by "coming to Christ," that those phrases are to you but shibboleths which can be pronounced with fatal facility, but have lost whatever significance they may once have had. Yet, if we have learnt to know and love in the Lord Jesus that perfect ideal of life, and holiness, and infinite compassion; to take His yoke upon us; to be meek and lowly of heart, to show our love to Him by trying to keep His commandments - if we have learnt from Him to bear and forbear, to give and forgive, to work faithfully, to suffer patiently, to trust entirely, to love sincerely, to hope even unto the end - if we have learnt to make Christ to us not a material Christ, attainable only by formal ministrations; not a sectarian Christ whose interests are exclusively identified with those of our own religious body, not a Christ of stereotyped ceremonial, whose spirit can only be mechanically transmitted; not a dead Christ contemplated exclusively as He was in the momentary triumph of death, and in the hour and power of darkness; not *our* Christ only, but the eternal Head and universal Brother in the great universal family of man;—then, in proportion as we thus seek

Him will He reveal Himself to us as a living, loving, uplifting, interceding friend. We shall know Him then as a very present help in time of trouble; as one who will be with us in the most desolate hours of darkness and loneliness; with us when all the world, with its endless cares and trials, makes "no purple in the distance"; holding us by the right hand; guiding us with His eye; more to us transcendently than all the world beside! When, I say, we have learnt this (as God's design in the loving guidance of all our lives is to teach it to us), then truly our fellowship will be with the Father, and with Jesus Christ His Son.

iii. Here, then, are the objects of the Gospel and Epistle of St. John, stated by himself, the disciple whom Jesus loved. The Son of God is the beginning and the end of that teaching; Jesus, the divine ideal of a perfect human life; Christ, the Saviour of the world; the Word who was in the bosom of the Father and has revealed Him. And in our mutual fellowship with Him we have glad immediate access to and filial relationship with God; fellowship with God and with one another. And "these things," adds St. John, "write we"—"*we*," whom Christ chose as His witnesses for all time; and we *write* that the testimony may not be left to the interested perversions of a shifting tradition, but may be a permanent and recorded

word. These things—the witness to Christ, the source of life in God in all its manifold aspects—write we, not to you only, but to all men for ever, that *our joy*—the common joy of you and of us—*may be fulfilled*.

Joy : it is life at its very highest, its very brightest, its very best. Alas ! with the common life of men it has little to do. Look back on your life, and see how many of its days or weeks you can describe as full of joy. Walk in these streets, and on how many faces do you see the light of joy ? There are two conditions requisite for joy—innocence and fellowship : and both conditions are all too rare. The world, not possessing either—for its seductions are evil and its fellowships are false—aims at a guilty substitute for joy. But there is no such thing. Guilty excitement, guilty passion, there is ; but one drop of guilt in the sparkling cup of true joy makes it bitter, envenomed, turbid, even in the moment of fruition. It is at the best the sweetness of the fruit whose taste is poison, the glitter of the serpent whose bite is death. Its pleasure is unsatisfying at the moment, and its effects deprave for ever. But true joy is a rose of Paradise, which only the hand of innocence can pluck. God only can grant true joy to any human soul. “Thou shalt show me the path of life ; in Thy presence is the fulness of joy ; and at Thy right hand

there are pleasures for evermore." There, and nowhere beside. Would you have the secret of a joy serious, noble, enduring? St. John wrote this Epistle to reveal it to you. It is fellowship with God in Christ, and in Christ with your brother-men. Nay, our Lord Jesus Christ gives it us in His own words: "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in His love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be fulfilled."

Perhaps some of you may say, "I know nothing of this joy." Alas! it may well be so. I can quite believe it. For there are probably some in every congregation who belong wholly to the world; and perhaps many, in every congregation, who belong nominally to a church, but not really to the church of Christ. We see no true joy in the world; little serene beatitude in the merely nominal church. For when we contemplate the world we see not love, but hatred; the jostling press of a selfish competition; the fretful self-assertion of a pushing egotism. My heart is sick, my ears are stunned, with the mutual recriminations, the gross personalities, the studied insults, the one-sided injustice of political and social warfare. We see in one sphere the greedy accumulations of an insatiable avarice;

we hear in another the sullen murmurs of a chronic discontent. In the worldly life there is truly little of fellowship with man, and none with God; and because there is selfishness and not love, there is misery and not joy; and the harpies flap their obscene wings over the gorgeous banquets of the world. But alas! it is little better, if at all better, in the merely nominal Church. Those who claim to be its sons seem to me to be too often actuated, in essence, by the same motives as the world; and to pursue them by the same unhallowed means. Professing Christians, who happen to differ from one another—how thoroughly unjust they are, how eager to insult those whose view of Christ and of the Gospel is not theirs!

“The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, without hypocrisy;” but the thing which calls itself Christianity, in the sphere that calls itself “the religious world,” when it is a Christianity which professes to love God while it hates its brother, is not true Christianity. Nor am I at all surprised at the existence of this false religion, this mock Christianity, this merely nominal churchmanship, because it has existed from the first. It stoned the prophets; it crucified the Lord of glory; it called the Master of the house Beelzebub; it rendered

miserable the life of St. Paul with persecution ; it preached Christ even of strife and envy. Even to the little churches of his earliest converts St. Paul had to say : "Whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and walk after the manner of men ?" Ah ! let us take heed to the object of the Gospel. St. John's statement of it was, that in having fellowship with the Father and His Son Jesus, we should also have fellowship *with one another*. Let us not deceive ourselves with names and words. That is not necessarily the Church which calls itself the Church, nor is he a Christian who is one outwardly ; but that is the true Church which is the unseen communion of them that are of a meek and gentle spirit, and he is a Christian who loves his brother in sincerity and truth. This is the communion of saints ; this the blessed company of all faithful people. I care not by what name men call them, or by what name they call themselves, but these who walk in love are the little flock ; these the salt of the earth. It is their hands that I will clasp ; it is their prayer that I desire ; it is at their feet that I fain would sit, that I may learn with them to love God with all my heart, and my neighbour as myself. That is the essence of St. John's teaching : "Beloved, let us love one another ; for love is of God ; and every one that loveth is born of God and knoweth God." It is the essence of

St. Paul's teaching : "Now the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of faith unfeigned." It is the essence of St. Peter's teaching : "See that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." It is the new and the last commandment of Christ, "for this commandment have we from Him, that he who loveth God love his brother also." Unless love abide in us, we are not true Christians, we cannot really belong to Christ. For in Christ Jesus neither do forms avail anything, nor does outer churchliness avail anything, but faith working by love. Here then is the very substance of the ends for which Christ came : first, knowledge of Jesus Christ, the Son of God ; next, as a result of this knowledge, fellowship with God ; fellowship with Christ ; fellowship in Christ with one another ; and lastly, as the crown and consummation of this fellowship, the joy which in its fulness and perpetuity can only spring from the knowledge that we have eternal life.

III.

The Nature of God.

“And this is the message which we have heard from Him, and announce unto you, that God is Light, and in Him is no darkness at all.”—1 JOHN i. 5.



THE connexion of this with the previous verse is obvious. St. John had promised to true believers the infinite privilege of fellowship with God ; but to have fellowship with God, however easily we may say it, is “a tremendous pretension.” It is not a thing to be assumed as a matter of course ; not a thing to be talked of with frivolous facility. Put side by side the two words “God” and “man,” with all that they mean, and you will see that, in proportion as we realize the stupendous difference between the two conceptions, the thought of any *fellowship* of man with God becomes more amazing. Who are we, creatures so slight and so transient, things so ordinary and so ignoble, that we should have fellowship with God ? And yet this is the very meaning of the Incarnation ; it is the sole and immense

reality, and without it all life is a fatal shipwreck or a hollow dream. Let us, then, with the deepest reverence and solemnity, try to understand something of what God is. You will ask, "How can we do so?" Can the finite compass the infinite? Can a dewdrop measure all the oceans? No; but I answer that it is the very meaning of the Gospel that Christ has taken up the Finite into the Infinite, so that two whole and perfect natures—that is to say, the Godhead and the Manhood—are joined together in one Person never to be divided; and I answer that the dewdrop, no less than the ocean, can mirror the blue depth of heaven. And thus, in its measure, the finite mortal being of man *can* apprehend—nay, can even be changed into—the image of the infinite eternal God.

It is in Christ alone that we can see reflected the face of God. Christ is to us the revelation of God; and therefore St. John, who was nearest to Christ on earth, alone of the sacred writers is inspired to tell us in so many words what God is.

All through the Old Testament we read of what God *does*; in Nature, laying the beams of His chambers in the waters, making the clouds His chariot, walking upon the wings of the wind; in Creation, holding the waters in the hollow of His hand, and taking up the isles as a very little thing; in Providence, helping and

loving us as an eagle stirreth up her nest, fluttereth over her young, spreadeth abroad her wings, taketh them, beareth them on her wings ; in Individual Life, saying to each of us, " My son, give me thine heart."

Often, too, we read of His attributes: that He is the Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering and of great mercy, forgiving iniquity and transgression, and by no means clearing the guilty.

But St. John alone tells us what God, in His own nature, *is*.

And he does not merely tell us this in vague abstractions—such, for instance, that He is " the Supreme Existence," or " the Boundless," or " a stream of tendency," or " the something not ourselves which makes for righteousness": Nor yet in negations, such as that He is without body, parts, and passions ; Nor yet by properties, as that He is of infinite power, wisdom, and goodness ; Nor yet in acts, as that He is the Maker and Preserver of things. No; but he tells us what God *is*. He does so in three sentences, on which we shall do well to meditate: God is Spirit ; God is Light ; God is Love. Those three sentences give us the outline of all which we can rightly think respecting the Divine Majesty.

The first sentence, " God is Spirit," is metaphysical; it denotes God in His own nature.

The second, "God is Light," is relative; it describes God in His manifestation to the world. The third, "God is Love," is personal; it describes the nature of God's manifestation to our race, and to our individual selves.* I wish, as briefly as I can, first to speak of this revelation of God, and then to show what bearing it has on our fellowship with Him.

1. God is a spirit, or rather "*God is Spirit.*" It was Christ's own revelation of God to the sinful Samaritan woman beside the lonely well. On all that we may learn from the fact that such a revelation should have been first made to such a person at such a place I will not now dwell, but only on the revelation itself. You know that, in the Old Testament, God is described, as He can alone be described, in terms of humanity. We read that "His eyes are in every place, beholding the evil and the good;" that His ears are open to the cry of His people; that the voice of the Lord shaketh the cedar trees; that He led forth His children with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. This description of God in the language of men, is called in theology Anthropomorphism; and in early days it was so little understood that Tertullian actually argues that God has, and must have, a body, and that what is incorporeal can only be non-existent. When the great

* See Westcott, "Epistle of St. John," p. 160.

Alexandrian teacher, Origen, showed how mistaken such views are, an old monk wailed out, "They have taken away my God from me, and I know not what to worship."

But many who are not thus ignorant fall into a worse anthropomorphism. They endow God—and not merely in metaphor and by analogy—with human passions. Because they hate, they think that God must hate. Because they are remorseless and unjust, they do not blush to represent God as remorseless and unjust. Because they are petty and ignoble, and care about the infinitely little, they think that God, too, must be petty and ignoble, and must care likewise about the infinitely little. To many a ruthless inquisitor and persecutor, stretching tender women on the rack, burning God's saints at the stake in horrible hecatombs, because they would not accept their "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," might not the voice of God have said, "These things hast thou done and I held my peace, and thou thoughtest wickedly that I was even such an one as thyself"? To us, who may see God visibly revealed in Christ—who is truly God, perfectly Man, indivisibly God-man, unconfusedly God and Man—such frightful errors should be inexcusable. God is not a man that He should be cruel, and care for outward trivialities. And God is Spirit; He is not only immaterial, but He has no limitations.

We live in Time ; we cannot adequately conceive of timelessness ; yet Time is nothing save a finite sequence, a relative conception. There are no mornings or evenings in heaven. The light of God is always in the meridian. There are no lines, no creeping shadows on the dial-plate of heaven ; there is no ripple of Time on the shoreless sea of Eternity ; no rolling years at the Centre of the changeless calm. God sees all things in the totality of their existence. "As," and "was," and "will be," to Him are but an ever-present "is." Past and present and future are to Him but one eternal now.

Again, *we* can only conceive of things as existing in Space ; but Space is only a mode of thought necessary to finite beings. Illimitable space is itself a self-contradictory and impossible conception. To God there is no space. He is everywhere. He is a circle, which is all centre, and which has no circumference. With Him there is no change, no transiency ; no variable-ness, neither shadow of turning ; and in this sense we may say of Him, without Pantheism, that He---

Changed through all, and yet in all the same,
Great in the earth, as in the ethereal frame,
Lives through all life, extends through all extent,
Spreads undivided, operates unspent.

God is Spirit. It is, indeed, more than we

can grasp ; but we can be silent, and we can adore ; and as we think thereon a voice says to us, as to Moses when he gazed on the bush, burning yet unconsumed, "Take off thy shoes from off thy feet, for the place whereon thou standest is holy ground."

2. Then, next, "God is Light." Observe that St. John does not say that He is "*a* Light," as though He were one of many, or even that He is "the Light," as though He spoke of earthly light ; or, with St. James, that He is "the Father of the Lights ;" or, with David, that "He clotheth Himself with Light as with a garment ;" but that God is Light. He is the archetype of all light. He is that Light, bodiless and impalpable, from whose unemptiable fountain our earthly light is but a faint spark or a dim shadow. He is the sole source of *all* life, as the sun is of all *earthly* life ; revealing—for all on which light shines is manifest ; diffusive—for only obstruction can stop its permeating ray.

Hail, Holy Light, offspring of Heaven, firstborn,
Or of the Eternal, co-eternal beam !
May I express thee unblamed ? Since God is Light,
And never but in unapproach'd light
Dwelt from Eternity—dwelt then in *thee* ;
Bright effluence of bright essence increate.
Or hear'st thou rather pure ethereal stream
Whose fountain who shall tell ? Before the Sun,
Before the heavens thou wert ; and at the voice

Of God, as with a mantle, didst invest
The rising world of waters dark and deep,
Won from the void and formless infinite.

It has been pointed out that two modern discoveries illustrate this deep truth that God is Light. Recently chemical researches have shown us that while the prism divides light into sevenfold elements of colour, there are ultra-violet rays beyond the seven, which we cannot discover with the eye, and of which we have no suspicion; so that even as light is but partially apprehensible to the eye God is but partially apprehensible to our finite souls. And again, this age has discovered that light is ultimately the same thing as—in other words, is directly transformable into—heat, and force, and motion; so that all creation is but one act—the birth of Light. God is Light. The revelation sums up all that Christ was, all that Christ did; for He said, “I am the Light of the world.” He is “the transitive energy of the immanent characteristic.” In Him we see the unbroken Light of God; as in all which this world holds of good we see its reflected gleam, its refracted elements, its broken rainbows. The God-man Jesus shows us the Light of God transmitted in one continuous, undivided ray. In all human sainthood and holiness we see the same light, reflected indeed from Him, but broken up by its refractory media into all

the imperfect yet lovely colours of the world, of the rainbow, and of the evening clouds.

3. And "*God is Love*." Divinest, tenderest, most perfect of all divine, tender, perfect revelations; reserved, as it were, by inspiration for 'his Epistle of St. John, to be the last syllable of the apostolic witness. That God is Love is indeed a true epitome of all the Gospel, but to put it into express eternal words was the final glory of this Epistle, which, as I said, is the epilogue of the Gospel. "God is Spirit" in Himself; "God is Light" in His immanent diffusive character; "God is Love" in relation to you, and to me, and to all mankind. That is, the ultimate, the most intelligible, the divinest utterance of God's own voice. With those three ringing hammer-strokes of the Word, we may dash in pieces for ourselves ten thousand idols of human theology—idols of the theatre, the forum, and the cave—trumpery, gilded idols—hidden in dark shrines of Pharisaic pride—adored with suffocating perfumes of human vanity—tricked out with the intricate, shamy jewellery of human ordinances. We may drag them out before the true God of Spirit, Light, and Love, and then fling them for ever to the moles and to the bats! Let no distorted system of traditional orthodoxy teach you that God is a tyrant, or a Pharisee, or an inquisitor; for God is a Spirit. Do not believe that He can be

served by evil things, by "speaking wickedly for God and talking deceitfully for Him"—for He is Light. Do not be led to think that He is some Moloch of eternal hatred—for God is Love. Spirit may be self-centred; Light may be impersonal; but Love is a conscious thing. It belongs to a living God. It cannot exist without an object; without reciprocity; without self-consciousness; without personality. "God is Love." Do you need proof of it, amid the conflict, the disorder, the anguish of the world? I say that, all true Christianity, all the Gospel, and all Christendom are the proof of it. The first, widest, most eternal proof of it is Christ, for "God so loved the world that He sent His only begotten Son into the world that we might live through Him." And Christianity, and Christendom, and every true individual Christian, are secondary proofs of it, for "while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly, and "he that abideth in love abideth in God." It is easy to love what is pleasant, engaging, beautiful, attractive. Such love may be innocent, may even be sanctified; yet because its inevitable root is self, the Greek word which describes it (*ἔρως*) finds no place in the New Testament.

But to love lepers; to love sinners; to love rebels; to love the lost; to love the fallen; to love publicans; to love even Priests and Pha-

risees, who had turned religion itself into a vice ; to love His murderers ; to love mean Jews and lustful Gentiles ; to love our vulgar commonplace humanity ; to love the wretched many in their ignorance, drink, and squalor ; to love those whose character had become so repellent and so creeping ; to love all that was most alien from Himself ; to love children of the darkness and of the dust—this love of a boundless, inconceivable, redeeming pity—this was the love of God in Christ. “God is Love”—beside that revelation speech fails. To know it is the beatific vision. In face of it even the systems and anathemas of a hate-breathing theology are struck dumb. We can hardly realize it except upon our knees.

4. “God is Spirit,” “God is Light,” “God is Love.” My friends, how easy it is to say these three sentences, but the ardour of burning cherubim and shining seraphim cannot fathom them. There is a story of an old hermit who, beginning with another to study Scripture, at the verse, “I said I will take heed to my ways that I offend not with my tongue,” told his friend years afterwards that he had never been able to get beyond that moral precept, it was so hard to learn. What then shall we say of these revelations ? Let us confess our impotence, and pour forth our thankfulness. God is in heaven and we on earth, therefore let our

words be few. But this we may do—namely, consider the bearing of these words on man, on ourselves, on the object of St. John's Gospel and Epistle, that we may have faith in Christ, and fellowship with God in Him, and fellowship with one another, and that so our joy may be fulfilled.

i. "*God is Spirit.*" What must we learn from this? Spirit is the antithesis to flesh, "Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lusts of the flesh." "Now, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these—fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, heresies, envyings, drunkenness, revellings, and such like; but the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance—against such there is no law." The truth then that "God is Spirit" has a twofold bearing—on our life and on our worship. On our life: for when in our life there is carnality and worldliness, there can be no fellowship with God, and they that are in the flesh cannot see Him. And on our worship: for "God is Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." God does not want from us a huddle of external ceremonies such as constituted the essence of a mechanical Levitism or a Pagan ritual. Such things can never take

the place of sincerity, meekness, obedience, purity. External scrupulosities will not in themselves be of more value to Christ than were the blue ribands, the phylacteries and ablutions of the Pharisees who hated Him, or the priesthoods and sacrifices of the Sadducees who crucified Him. Make Lebanon a flaming altar with thousands of rams and ten thousands of rivers of oil; yea, give your firstborn for your transgression, the fruit of your body for the sin of your soul—it will not do. God needs the heart; God is Spirit. Three words of worship uttered from the heart's sincerity are better than millions of words uttered in all the splendour and will-worship of mere external form. One prayer, "God be merciful to me the sinner!" may be of more avail by far than if, with a soul unloving and impure, we were at matins, lauds, prime, tierce; sexts, nones, vespers, complines, for all day long of the livelong year.

ii. For also "*God is Light.*" We cannot deceive Him by mere outward service. He trieth the hearts; He searcheth the reins; He readeth the inmost thoughts. All things are naked and open to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; and to translate this text literally, "darkness there is not in Him, no, not in any way."

All Christianity is in this sentence, for it means that God manifests Himself; that man

was created to receive Him ; that man re-created in Christ *can* receive Him ; but on this condition--that man seek Him, and strive to be like to Him. Light is the analogue to Life, Truth, Holiness. If we would have fellowship with God we must walk in the light, as He is in the light. If we love the charnel-house of death and darkness then the light shineth in vain in the darkness, and the darkness comprehendeth it not. The condition then of fellowship with God is that there should be no darkness in us --no subterfuges ; no duplicity ; no dishonest and guilty concealments ; no hidden chambers of the Temple full of shame and sin ; not two lives in one ; no self-deceit, or even self-delusion ; no mask of hypocrisy ; no base secondary motives ; nothing jesuitical ; no manipulations of truth or of doctrine ; no telling of lies or blackening of names to serve a party or promote a cause ; no suppression of truth or suggestion of falsehood ; no vile pretence of doing evil that good may come. Oh, man ! wouldst thou have fellowship with God ? Then must thou be open as the sunlight, transparent, simple, sincere, guileless, with no guilty secrets, with no dim spectres haunting the secret chambers of thy life. The earthly correlative to "God is Light" is "Walk in the Light," "Be children of the Light," "Bring forth the fruits of Light."

iii. And "*God is Love.*" The correlative

to that truth, which, in its excess of brightness, reduces love itself to silence, is given again and again by Christ in the Gospel by St. John in this Epistle. Gospel and Epistle are indeed entirely comments on this truth, and on its resultant duty. It is the lesson which the beloved disciple, too aged and too weak to preach, is said to have repeated in each church as he was carried thither in a litter, "Little children, love one another!" It is the duty which of all others the world, both in the Church and out of it, most defiantly and flagrantly ignores. It is the duty by the neglect of which, under excuses of false religion and party zeal, the nominal Church unchurches itself, and most constantly and most unblushingly sins (Jas. iii. 16). It is the sole duty by which she can convert the world; it is the source of the best we can do, and of all that we can hope. St. John has nowhere directly contemplated, as St. Paul has dared to do, the triumphant end of all things, the perfect restitution and *palingenesia* of the whole creation which travaileth in pain together until now, waiting for the adoption—to wit, the redemption of the body. But for all whose view of such vast hopes is not built on scraps of texts, and shreds of metaphor, and misinterpretations of traditional ignorance, nor on the narrow formulæ of sectarian theology, but on the Incarnation, and on the work of Christ, and on the nature

and revelation of the Triune God as Spirit, Light, and Love, St. John has said all that we desire, and more than all that we could have dared to hope, when he sums up not only his own Gospel but all revelation in the beatific utterance of the message received from Christ, that God is Love.

IV.

The Nature of Man.

THE DENIAL OF SIN AN IMPEDIMENT TO FELLOWSHIP
WITH GOD.

"If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie, and do not the truth."—1 JOHN i. 6.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us."—1 JOHN i. 8.

"If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."—1 JOHN v. 10.

If we are to have that faith in Christ the creation of which was the object of the Gospel—if we are to enjoy that fellowship with God, with Christ, and with one another, and the resultant perfectness of joy which the Apostle promises—we must recognize, on the one hand, that God is Spirit, Light, and Love; and, on the other, that we, if we would know Him, must walk in His Spirit, partake in His life, reflect and transmit His love. Therefore, man's nature is an element in the problem of our eternal existence. God might call us, and call in vain; He might invite us,

and we might refuse ; for between us and God comes in the tremendous obstacle, the unspeakably miserable episode of sin.

Upon the breast of new-created earth
Man walked ; and when and wheresoe'er he moved,
Alone or mated, solitude was not.
He heard borne on the wind the invisible voice
Of God ; and angels to his sight appeared,
Crowning the glorious hills of Paradise ;
Or through the groves gliding like morning mist
Enkindled by the sun.

But when man revolted and fell—when the veil of innocence was torn away, and he was left naked to guilty shame—when he had listened to the Serpent's lie, and rejected the word of God—then there could be

No more of talk where God or angel guest
With man as with His friend, familiar used
To sit indulgent.

The fellowship with God was fatally disturbed ; man hid himself from the voice of God in the obstructing darkness. Unless we recognize sin as this terrible hindrance to peace with God, we shall neither seek nor understand its remedy. And it is man's tendency to deny the hindrance ; to ignore sin while he yields to it ; to pretend to a fellowship with God, when, by all the deeds of the body, and by all the desires of the mind, he is alien from Him. Fellowship with God is impossible except to those who

recognize what He is and what they are ; that He is Holy, Holy, Holy, of purer eyes than to behold iniquity ; and that they are carnal, sold under sin.

1. There are three ways in which men try to shirk the acknowledgment of their real state. They are indicated in the three clauses which I have quoted, and so carelessly do most of us read Scripture that even professed commentators treat these texts as though they were little more than a sort of irritating tautology, peculiar to the style of St. John, and which has no meaning in particular. Yet so far are these three clauses from repeating the same thing in different words, that, on the contrary, they point out three different and deadly tendencies, which, if we would enjoy the promised fellowship with God, we must utterly resist. Those three tendencies are, either to ignore the reality of sin ; or to repudiate our responsibility for sin ; or to deny our personal share in sin.* They are to say, first, "Tush, thou God carest not for it;" or, secondly, "It cannot be helped;" or thirdly, "I, personally, am not guilty." The first is practically atheism ; the second is practically fatalism ; the third is practically Pharisaism. Again, the first is falsity ; the second self-deception ; the third blasphemy. Let us humbly consider them, lest in us should exist any

* See Westcott, p. 17.

one of these impediments to fellowship with God.

i. The first of these tendencies is described in the words, "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in the darkness, we lie and do not the truth." It describes the tendency to ignore sin, to say that there is no such thing as sin. Strange to say, it is possible to "walk in the darkness," and yet, all the while, to assume that we have fellowship with God, who is Light. Such a thing could not be believed if we did not continually see it. It is the utter indifference to, and unconsciousness of, sin which is the obduracy of callous hearts. Look at Balaam—the words of inspiration upon his lips, the dreams of avarice and lust in all his soul. Look at Achan—fighting the battles of Israel, while the ingot and the Babylonish garment lie buried in his tent. Look at Gehazi, the chosen servant of the prophet, with his bland lie of injured innocence, "Thy servant went no whither," while he had cheated the generosity of the trustful Syrian, and disgraced his master's fame. How many practically say, each of his own special temptation, "There is no harm in it." This may happen before the conscience has been awakened, or after it has been seared. In either case it may be said, Ephraim is turned to idols, let him alone; Ephraim hath grey hairs upon him here and there, and

knoweth it not. It may occur in whole nations. There were Greeks and Romans living in the lusts of the flesh, practising infanticide, steeped in cruelty, whose sphere was so entirely in the darkness that their very understanding was darkened, and having become past feeling they abandoned themselves, without the least compunction or remorse, to all passions of dishonour. There are many Christian nations who are not thus callous to the whole moral law, but whose conscience has become partially benumbed with reference to special sins. Their moral sense is still quick and tender to some crimes—as, for instance, slavery; hard as the nether millstone to others—as, for instance, drunkenness. Even in early Christian days there were sects of heretics who openly denied the reality of sin, and pretended that they could be at once saints and profligates; that they could serve God with the heart, while they yielded without restraint to every impulse of the flesh. There have been fanatics in ancient times like some of the Gnostics, and in modern times like the Anabaptists of Münster, who proclaimed that habitual transgression was compatible with a state of grace, and that flagrant immorality might go hand in hand with assured salvation. This folly is indeed rare as regards sin as a whole; but it is common even to a proverb in those who, in the words of the satirist,

making an exception in favour of certain faults,

Compound for sins they are inclined to,
By damning those they have no mind to.

The dreadful anomaly of the indifference even of the most professedly religious men, not to all sin, but to this or that sin, is quite familiar. Take such a man as the great novelist has drawn from nature in "Balfour of Burleigh:" cruel, misanthropic, murderous, remorseless—and yet always poring over his open Bible, and holding himself to be a saint of saints. Take such an Emperor as Charles V. of Germany,—a trickster, a liar, a glutton, a debauchee, and yet attending endless masses, and putting men to death if they so much as touched meat in Lent. Take *le grand Monarque*, Louis XIV.,—heartless, ambitious, adulterous, tyrannic, and yet devoutly orthodox—dragonnading innocent and noble Huguenots, because they stood fast in the liberty wherewith Christ had made them free. Take such an ecclesiastic as Pope Pius V.: he has been called "that terrible creature a perfect priest, a man sincerely believing himself to be invested with mysterious power from above—yet, in what he regarded as the Church's service, shrinking from no atrocity and no absurdity; rewarding the brutal massacres of Alva, singing *Te Deums* for the slaughter of St. Bartholomew's, and ready, as he wrote to Philip II. of Spain, to sell his

last chalice and his last shirt for the assassination of Queen Elizabeth." Take the systematic violations of the plainest rules of morals which have been supposed to be allowable in the interest of the Church, and compatible with personal godliness (1 John ii. 4 ; iii. 6). Are not all who act thus, in one sphere of their lives, walking in the darkness, while yet they say that they have fellowship with the Light? My friends, let us search ourselves with candles to see that we be not ourselves renegades to our own knowledge. For see how uncompromisingly St. John deals with this subtle form of falsity: "If we say that we have fellowship with God, and walk in the darkness," then, like a whip across the face, comes the Apostle's stern, "we lie, and do not the truth." Actively "we lie," by saying that which is not ; passively, "we do not the truth," by making our whole lives and actions unreal. Actively, we assert what we know to be false ; passively, we contradict by our whole conduct the position which we claim to hold. St. John says the same thing with equal plainness in other places. "He that saith I know Him, and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and reality is not in him." "Whosoever sinneth" (*i.e.*, is living in willing sin), may say that he has fellowship with God, but "he hath not seen Him, neither knoweth Him." Churches

and theologians are always putting forth entirely false tests of fellowship with God. They judge it by external conformity, mechanical observances, formal standards of orthodoxy. God has but one test. It is wholly different from these; it is absolutely simple; it is repeated again and again in every possible form throughout the whole of the Old and New Testaments. It is: "he that doeth righteousness is righteous." It is: "he that doeth good is of God; he that doeth evil hath not seen God." Who are the real enemies, and underminers of Christianity? Far less the publicans than the Pharisees. Far less the avowed sceptics than the insincere formalists. Far less the open worldlings than those who with the most tremendous professions on their lips, and the most ostentatious religiosity in their actions, go away to defraud their neighbours, or to dawdle away their own useless and self-indulgent lives, or to be absorbed in their own callous egotism, or to tell lies of their brethren, or to be lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God.

2. And so we come to the second false tendency which is fatal to fellowship with God: "*If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.*" This is a different assertion from the last. That was the lie of a flagrant contradiction between what we assert and what we know: this is the self-

deceit of *denying our own responsibility*. That was to be false to our real conviction: this is to be false to ourselves, and to say "we have no sin," as though our sins were something outside of us and did not affect us. In the first case we say "morality is a matter of indifference;" in the latter, we say "I cannot help it; it is fate; it is heredity; it is not volition; it is only with my body, not with my heart, that I serve the law of sin. Even though it is wrong, though I have committed it, it is no part of my real nature; it is, so to speak, a mere accident." With this opiate men lull themselves into fatal sleep. They think that they can be pardoned and yet retain the offence. They think that they can eat the forbidden fruit, yet find in their mouth no gravel and bitterness. They think that they may defile with ten thousand stains the white robes of their baptism, and yet go in to the bridegroom's feast. There are really no limits to the insane possibilities of this self-deceit. A Minister of State, on the very day that he had been active in leading his king into an open violation of God's moral law, went home and wrote in his diary a touching prayer, intended for no eye but his own. A horrible murderer of thirty years ago, used to have private prayers in his own family with every semblance of real devotion. How many a living drunkard regards himself as very tem-

perate! How many a man, whose practical dishonesty is veneered with professional conventions, thinks himself a person of unimpeachable integrity! Alas! if our sins were written on our foreheads in the too legible autograph of the Recording Angel, how many a man would be horribly startled to read the plain indictment! How much better would it be for many a man if he were less busy in cataloguing in his note-book the faults of others, and would but for a moment turn the aching revealing sunbeam into the dark chambers of his own secret heart!

For St. John is as uncompromising in his denunciation of this falsity as of the other. He considers wilful self-deceit as no less culpable than defiant falsehood. He points at the conscience of such a man the outstretched finger of condemnation; he utters against him the crashing doom of self-conviction. He says, "Thou art the man." Think not that thou canst thus disintegrate thine own individuality, and claim that all belongs to God when thou hast consecrated half to the devil. Ah! that thief, that murderer in heart, that adulterer in thought, that cheat under the conventionalities of a professional standard, that liar under the veil of the anonymous, that ungrateful, that money-loving man, that soul corrupted through and through with worldliness, that idle, selfish, thankless, graceless, worthless cumberer of the ground—

dost thou despise him? dost thou condemn him? It is not another, it is thou thyself! Thou canst not disown him. Thou art indissolubly identified with him. Thou art responsible for all his sins. They are thine own sins. Thou hast done with them. Alas! alas! they have not done with thee. Confess them, get rid of them, or they shall be to thee as the garment which is upon thee, as the girdle which thou art girded withal. For, if we say that we have no sin, then actively we are leading ourselves astray; passively the truth is not in us—*i.e.*, our lives are not being spent in the sphere of reality, but in a mirage of self-deceit, of semblance, and of death.

3. St. John has dealt, then, with two false subterfuges: the lie that sin has no real sinfulness; the self-delusion that it leaves no guilt in us. He has shown us that we cannot thus be false to our knowledge, false to ourselves; that sin is in itself exceeding sinful; that sin confronts us with our responsibility, and leaves on us the brand of guilt. But there is a third refuge of lies which he must destroy. For a man may not be guilty of denying that sin is sin, like the first; nor yet, like the second class, deny that men are responsible for their sins; and yet he may assert, in the blind arrogance of spiritual pride, *that he himself has committed no sin*. Such a man says, "As for me, I have walked

in my integrity ; I am immaculate ; I have done no wrong." He says, with the Pharisee standing haughtily in the Temple, "God, I thank thee that I am not, as the rest of men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. I fast twice in the week ; I give tithes of all that I get." Ah, such a man goes down to his house less justified than the weeping mourner who can only sob out the one short litany, "God be merciful to me the sinner." For, to these blind leaders of the blind, Christ says, "Now ye say 'we see,' therefore your sin remaineth." But oh, what blindness for any man, however long his prayers, however blue his fringe, however broad his phylactery, to walk in this world, so full of gins and pitfalls, of sudden, manifold temptations—for a man who is the heir to so many defects of will, so many taints of blood ; so beset with frailty of mortal nature, and all the crafts and subtleties which the devil or man worketh against him—to maintain that he is, and always has been, without any sin ! Oh, that such a man could see himself as others see him, or even as he sees others ! would it not cure him of this shocking arrogance of spiritual pride, the special temptation of men who seem to be religious ? It is told that once the hermit St. Antony, seeing all life beset with infinite snares and nets of the evil one outspread on every side, exclaimed in agony, "How is it

possible for any human soul to escape all these?" And the answer came to him from above: "Antony, it is possible to humility alone." How fatal then is religious pride! We are fellow-sinners all of us, and if we would enter the low-arched gate of Heaven it can only be weeping and on our knees. We cannot find, we shall not truly seek the Good Physician, until we feel that we are sick and sore wounded.

And St. John deals no less sternly with this form of falsehood than with the others. "If we say that we have not sinned, we make God a liar, and His word is not in us." We make God a liar: it is a tremendous expression, but only consider how just it is! For if we claim to be innocent when we are in reality guilty, we give the lie to that whole revelation which is the Word of God. Actively we reduce to one comprehensive nullity that which God's whole dealings with man assume. We give the lie to all the spiritual institutions of the divine economy, the remission of sins, the cleansing from sin, God's entire government and work upon earth, yea, the whole manifestation of the Son of God, based as it was on the presupposition of human sin. We do this actively, and therefore passively His Word is not in us. "If the cleansing from sin be an essential element of our walking in the light, then the denial of the necessity of this cleansing

is the strongest token of our being in the darkness."

We see, then, that John has stabbed to the heart three common falsehoods, and has established, in these sentences, three solemn truths. One is, that sin is a terrible reality; the second is, that for every sin that we commit we are personally responsible; the third is, that from this terrible reality not one of us is free. Let us grasp these truths. We must be awakened before we can be converted. The frank, humble, penitent acknowledgment of sin must precede the possibility of grace. To no human being, until with conscience-stricken David he has sobbed forth, "I have sinned," can the gracious message possibly come, "The Lord also lieth put away thy sin." We can have no faith, no fellowship, no joy, nothing of that eternal life which St. John proclaims, until we have recognized, in something more than words, that God is infinitely holy, and that we are infinitely guilty. Let this great lesson suffice for our present meditation, and so shall we begin by God's grace to realize the counter-condition which St. John here lays down: "If we walk in the light we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth from all sin: if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

V.

The Nature of Sin.

"Every one that doeth sin, doeth also lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness." - 1 JOHN iii. 4.



SIN is the one terrible episode in human history, the one fatal obstacle to divine communion. Having, then, considered the nature of God, and the nature of man, we must next consider the nature of sin. And in one of his deep pregnant sentences which I have taken for my text, St. John tells us exactly what it is. "Sin," he says, "is lawlessness." *

1. The definition, short and simple as it sounds, is a flash of light upon a most mysterious subject. It sweeps away two immense errors. (i.) In vainly perplexing themselves about the origin of moral evil, many philosophies have arrived at the conclusion that sin is supernatural--*i.e.*, that it is something beyond and above nature; that it is an inevitable factor in creation; that evil is thus the necessary shadow of good, and a

*. So in 2 Thess. ii. 3-8, "the man of sin" is "the lawless one."

thing that can never cease. This is the heresy of Dualism, the heresy of whole religions which maintain that there are two deities—an evil as well as a good God ; that Ebal has its deity as well as Gerizim ; that darkness has its Ahriman, as well as light its Ormuzd ; that cursing and anguish have their demon of terror, as well as blessing and joy their God of love. And thus ignorance as to the true nature of sin has caused men to violate the first commandment, and to worship other gods than God. (ii.) Or, again, men have believed that evil is connected with matter ; that sin is consequently *physical* ; that there is something in our bodily nature which is inherently and essentially evil. And for this reason, with most disastrous consequences, they have taught—not the noble truth that our sinful appetites must be controlled and subdued by reason, and conscience, and wise self-denial—but that the body itself is to be crushed, tormented, macerated, mortified, starved, afflicted. They have treated the body as an unclean tomb, whereas God would have us treat it as a holy temple. Now, in this one word St. John cuts away the root of both errors. Sin, he says, is lawlessness. It is therefore neither inherent in any supernatural necessity, nor is it something which permeates our mortal bodies and all material things ; but it is simply and solely a transgression of a law. It is a self-chosen disobedience

which subverts man's true relation to the will of God. The objective habit is coextensive with the subjective condition.

2. "Sin is lawlessness." What, then, is the law of which sin is a transgression? It is not only the Ten Commandments, so that sin may be avoided by outward conformity to them; it is not only that "moral law within," which is grander than the starry heavens above; it is not only the special "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" of Conscience which is the vicegerent of God within us—a Prophet, Priest, and King to each individual man. It is the total result of these, and of something which lies behind them. It is the threefold law of our being—our duty to God, to man, and to ourselves. Law is, in general, the whole will of God, revealed to us by all the books of God, spoken to us in all the voices of God, made known to us, above all, by Him who was the Word of God, by the living and eternal Christ. He has declared and manifested to us the Father, in order that we, with our sins forgiven, and victorious over the principle of sin within us, may become one with Him.

3. But if the law be thus divine and eternal, whence comes this lawlessness? What is the root of it? Is not the law holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good? Is not the character formed by obedience to that law,

lovelier than the morning or the evening star? In proportion as vice is hideous, so is virtue beautiful. Is there anything more divine than "the blush of innocence on young human cheeks"? Is there anything more exquisitely engaging and beneficent than a soul from which the pure dew of its morning has not been brushed by any corruption? Is there for our poor human nature any sweeter or more angelic ideal than "the glow of sympathy without, and the bloom of modesty within"—the character of a boy, of a youth, of a man, which is glowing like the rose of dawn in its enthusiasm, and white as the lily in its purity? And if this be so, if the law express our noblest nature, if obedience to it constitute our only true happiness, what can be the root of that hideous temptation which leads men to degrade themselves from this beautiful and noble altitude into the mean and wretched things they are?

4. The root of that temptation lies in the one mysterious, inexplicable word—Self. Well may the poet speak of "the abysmal deeps of personality." All revolt against God, all rebellion against His law, is simply the assertion of self; the determination to do what we like, not what we ought; the burning, fatal, and ill-regulated curiosity to pluck the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of evil as well as good. Read the story of the Fall in the Book of

Genesis, a story of unequalled depth and truth, and you will see that sin came from listening to the deadly whisper, "Ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." To souls of men thus inflamed by listening to the tempting serpent, disobedience assumes a seductive glamour. Their eyes are darkened by a fatal fascination, so that what they see is the deadly mirage of temptation, not the bare reality of its scorching wilderness. Once deluded by this magic haze, men begin to tamper with temptation; they linger near the forbidden tree; they are persuaded by the wicked doubt of God's Word, and hear the devil saying to them, in the darkness and the solitude, "Thou shalt not surely die." And so, hastily, they snatch the crude, the life-destroying fruit, and the guilty serpent slinks back into the thicket, and the voice of God, once sweeter to them than all melody, becomes fraught with terror, and they try in vain to hide themselves from the awful doom. It is this evil pride, this fatal self-assertion, this pettish refusal to be guided by the blessed love of God, this disbelief alike of His warnings and of His promises—this blind determination to defy the warnings of universal experience—this it is which is the principle of lawlessness, the root of all sin.

5. A deeply religious Swiss thinker has given us a striking illustration of this truth.

"Last night," he says, "under the starry sky, some drunken peasants, sitting under the trees near the window, were shouting with repellent vulgarity their coarse and brutal songs. Why does this vulgar discord of notes voluntarily false, and of derisive cynical words, delight people of this class? Why this shameless ostentation of moral ugliness? Why does this grinning mockery dilate and expand itself in the grand solitude of the tranquil night? Why? It is by a secret and deplorable instinct. It is from the need for asserting the individual self; for affirming oneself exclusively, egotistically, idolatrously, by opposing self to everything else, and putting it into rude contrast with surrounding nature, with all that is really noblest within us, with the true harmony which unites us to others, with the adoration which elevates us towards God. 'No,' it says, 'I will have nothing to do with God. I—I only—I myself. That is enough for me. I, by my own sin and moral ugliness; I, by the contortion, the irony, the caprice of my irresponsible independence; I, by peals of laughter, free as those of a devil; I, by defiance alike of human authority, of natural affection, and of divine law; I, my own master; I, for myself, sufficient to myself, living by myself, and for myself. What is God to me? What is government and good order to me? what the will of parents, teachers,

pastors, masters to me?' Brutal selfishness it is which is at the bottom of this false joy, this echo of Satan; this temptation to make self the centre of revolt. It is the ignoblest side of individuality, the caricature of our high attribute of free-will, the parody of our divineness, the lowest vulgarization of the majesty of our life and the sovereignty of our soul." The selfishness and egotism of men is like that room in the old palace of Wurzburg, so lined with mirrors that, if you stand in the centre of it, you see yourself reflected an infinite number of times from every wall. So to selfish, sinful, conceited men, the world is a millionfold reflection of self—I, I, I everywhere. Nothing interests them but their own passions, aims, interests, merits, successes. They can talk, they can think, of nothing else.

A sordid solitary thing

Mid countless brethren, with a lonely heart
Through courts and cities the smooth savage roars,
Feeling himself, his own low self, the whole.

He would ruin a whole family, destroy a whole people, for his own gratification. He would break up the whole universe, if thereby he could make for himself a more comfortable seat.

6. So, then, all sin is, in its ultimate analysis, the sin of self. Self-assertion, stiff-neckedness, hatred of reproof, the effeminate scream of wounded vanity, spurious independence, false

liberty, impotent, revolt—these are the root of sin, the principle of wrongdoing; and they tend to those special acts of transgression against the moral law which are separate sins. And these special acts of wrongdoing react upon, and at last constitute, the character. Acts pass into habits. We become what we do. The terrible consequences recall the dreadful parentage. Lust, when it hath conceived, bringeth forth sin, and sin when it is finished bringeth forth death.

7. Now the law of God is threefold; and therefore this self-assertion declares itself in three ways: in our relations to ourselves, to God, and to our fellow-men. Sin against ourselves rises from the forgetting that we are “not our own, but bought with a price,” and so indulging ourselves to our own destruction, in gluttony, drunkenness, impurity, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Sin as regards God is a violation of His law through unbelief and disobedience, or any form of avarice, or love for the things of the world, which is idolatry. Sin as regards our fellow-men is a violation of the law by selfish callousness, or cruelty, or false witness, or envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, and quite as much in nominally religious as in professedly irreligious men.

8. Such is sin, in its principle and in its

manifestation. And what are its consequences? In St. John they are mainly set forth by three metaphors—debt, bondage, and alienation from God.

i. Debt. Do any of you know, or have you ever known, the mingled degradation and misery of being in debt? Most earnestly would I warn you against that self-avenging dishonesty. Earnestly would I bid every young man here to deny himself, to forbear, to give up, to economize; not to make a rueful age out of a reckless and indolent youth; not to indulge himself in every passing whim; to look forward to the long grey uncertain years to come, when he shall say, "I have no pleasure in them." He will find it in the long run infinitely less painful, infinitely less trying, to live at any cost of self-denial well within his income. If he values his own happiness, his own self-respect, the dignity of his character, the honest haughtiness of being able to look the whole world in the face because he owes not any man, then I would urge him to live on £50 a year though he has £100, rather than to live on £101 when he has only £100. But the misery of being in debt to man is only a dim emblem of the far deeper misery of being in debt to God; a debt that we can never pay; a debt infinite in its daily, weekly, monthly, yearly, lifelong accumulations; a debt which is to any human debt as ten thousand talents to two-

pence. To have incurred this fearful obligation of debt to God, of which, unless Christ free us from it, the penalty must be paid to the uttermost farthing, is indeed to go through life with a crushing burden laid upon the back, with a drowning millstone hung around the neck.

ii. And bondage. None of us, I suppose, have ever been in prison, but we can imagine what it is. We can imagine the vain, gnawing passion for liberty; the unsatisfied yearning for freedom and sunshine, and going our own ways; the shame of the prison dress; the loathing of the prison food; the horror of the prison society; the intolerable weariness of those blank enclosing walls, without anything to brighten, comfort, or ennoble, with no door of hope in them, while the iron slowly eats into the soul. Yet this again is but a faint symbol of sin, which is a prison without iron bars, but worse than any subterranean dungeon which man's cruelty ever devised; a prison under that devilish jailer whose tenderest mercies are infinitely cruel.

iii. And alienation from God. If we could rightly appreciate what this meant, it would involve a far ghastlier symbol than the other two. So long as we have friends; so long as we have but a single friend; but one to love, but one to pity us, but one to soothe us in the hour of anguish, and to cheer us in the depths of

depression—so long as we are not left utterly alone—then even the shame of debt may be lightened, even the curse of bondage become more tolerable. But when He who is all the Power, and all the Love, and all the Goodness of the universe is turned away from us, is hidden to us, is silent to us, has left us alone in our trouble, and in the hour of death, and in the day of judgment ; when our wilfulness and rebellion have separated us from our all-merciful yet terrible God ; then a horror of great darkness may well fall upon us, and the hair of our flesh stand up. Alienation from God is that blackness of utter darkness where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

9. You have heard, then, what sin is—even lawlessness ; what is the root of lawlessness, even egotism, selfishness, spurious independence, ruinous self-assertion ; you have heard what the consequences are, the debt of deserved retribution ; the prison-house of Satan ; the alienation from God and from everything which is or can be happy, pure, noble or divine. In my next address I will speak, God willing, of the Divine remedy for sin ; I will only add now that the whole object of St. John, the whole object of all the Gospel, is to point out to us that there is a remedy. God has not left His divine work to be hopelessly ravaged and ruined by the enemy of souls. Because He loved us,

while we were yet sinners, He sent His own Son to die for us, to love us even unto the end. We are fearfully in His debt, and every act of transgression deserves its just recompense of reward. If we are not afraid of our sins when we weigh them, shall we not be afraid when we number them? All those wrong and foolish words, all those base and unworthy deeds, one by one they might seem insignificant, but how are they in the aggregate? If one fallen leaf of the forest be a small matter, what are all the fallen leaves in their countless putrescent multitude? Well, Christ came to pay this vast debt of ten thousand talents, to grant us upon repentance the forgiveness of sins. We are tied and bound by the chain of sin, poor prisoners captured in the snare of the devil. Well, Christ came to preach deliverance to the captives, to burst the gates of brass, and smite the bars of iron in sunder; to say, "Flee unto the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope." We are aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenant of promise, having in ourselves no hope, and without God in the world. Well, Christ came to reconcile us unto the Father, to find His lost sheep, to bring His wanderers home. He can give us—if we seek Him, He *will* give us—not only forgiveness, but strength to resist in future; not only deliverance, but perfect liberty;

not only reconciliation, but assurance. He can not only create, but recreate; not only give, but give back.

If we accept this great salvation, we shall be safe under the shadow of His love. Our life will no longer be one futile self-assertion; our acts will no more be a transgression of the law. "What else could avail our sins but His righteousness?" In whom was it possible that we, the lawless and the impious, should be justified, save in the Son of God alone? O sweet exchange! O work past finding out! O benefits beyond expectation! that the lawlessness of many should be hid in the righteousness of one, and that the righteousness of one should justify the lawlessness of many." Yet this, and nothing less than this, is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ: "Him who knew no sin, He made to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him."

The Divine Remedy for Sin.

"But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleareth us from all sin" --1 JOHN 1:7

I AM trying to set before you the essence of the teaching of St. John, and the teaching of St. John is the final teaching of Holy Writ, uttered by its most beloved and spiritual exponent. It is the very Gospel of salvation offered through Christ the Son of God. Thus far we have seen St. John's high purpose, which is to tell us how we may attain to the two mighty promises of life through faith in Jesus Christ, and of joy in fellowship with God, and with one another. As the conditions of these immeasurable hopes we had to consider the nature of God—as Spirit, Light, Love; the nature of man—as guilty, yet trying to deny and ignore his guilt, the nature of sin—as lawlessness, the consequences of sin—as debt, bondage, alienation from God; and Christ's promise of forgiveness of the debt,

deliverance from the bondage, atonement for the alienation. We have now to ask, "*How* does Christ give us these blessings?" "What is the nature of God's remedy for sin?" We are, as we saw, self-alienated from God by the principle of sin within us, which is selfish pride, and by the acts of sin, which, springing from that false principle, constitute our character, and cause us to hate God, while we are also hateful, and hating one another. We need, then, "two things: a change of condition, and a change of feeling"; a change of condition, a new heart, a new life, a new motive; a change of feeling, the love of worthy sons, not the terror of guilty slaves.

i. We need *a change of condition*. So long as we are either unregenerate or fallen from grace, the centre of gravity of our whole being is self. We need to shift the centre of gravity from self to God. So long as self is in all our thought, and God scarcely in one of them, so long we are earthly, sensual, devilish. We need, then, the new birth, the changed character, the awakening, the transformation. St. Paul, after reminding the Gentiles of vice, and shame, and guilt, in which they once had lived, adds, "And these things (*ταῦτα*) were some of you; but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God." We need this washing, justification, sanctification.

In other words, we need that God should destroy in us the principle of sin.

ii. And we need *a change of feeling*. Now we are tied and bound with the chain of our sins; "our sins have taken such hold upon us that we are not able to look up." We are like the prodigal, before there came over him, like a vernal breeze, the thought of his father's love. We are like the Gentiles, whom—because they did not choose to retain God in their knowledge—God gave up to a reprobate mind. While we are carnal, sold under sin, sullenly conscious of its burden, despairing slaves in its dungeon, so long there is a barrier of our own raising between us and God. We need the pardon of our actual sins, as well as the destruction of the principle of sin within us.

2. A remedy, then, was terribly necessary for the sinful nature and for actual sins. And that remedy—oh! how unsearchable is the depth of the riches of the love of God!—that remedy has been provided by the infinite compassion and tenderness of God. It might well seem impossible—and to the unbelieving it does seem impossible—that God should be able to work in us, in creatures so wretched and so fallen, either of these vast spiritual miracles; that He should be able to change our condition, and make us holy instead of vile; or change our feelings, and make us dear sons

instead of discontented slaves. But it is true : according to the working of His mighty power He is able to subdue *even all things* unto Himself.

First, He is able to annihilate the principle of sin within us, to hush the revolt, to abase the insane pride, to break the iron snew in the neck of obstinacy, to annihilate our false and evil self. Can the avaricious man cease to worship Mammon ? Can the cruel man become gentle ? the envious loving ? the selfish generous ? Can the unclean become pure of heart, and see God ? Can the flesh of the moral leper come to him again like the flesh of a little child ? Can the Ethiopian change his skin, or the leopard his spots ? It is the old problem of Ezekiel in the valley of the dry bones, ' Can these dry bones live ? ' It is the old despairing question of Nicodemus, " How can a man be born when he is old ? Can he enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born ? " It is the miracle which staggered St. Cyprian before his conversion. He tells us that he deemed it impossible that one who, like himself, had been worldly and impure, should be restored from sin to innocence, and from Satan unto God. And yet to him, as to myriads of the saints of God, the change did come—the old were born again. The breath of God came from the four winds, and breathed upon the slain, and they,

arose and stood upon their feet, an exceeding great army. This is the changed condition—regeneration the new birth. Is God's arm shortened, that He cannot save? Is His ear heavy, that He cannot hear? The children of wrath have become children of God;—why should it not be so with you and me?

3. God, we see, can recreate the present; but can He also work the other miracle? Can He also annihilate the past? He can give us the clean heart, and renew the right spirit within us, but can He also restore the years which the locust hath eaten? Can He undo that which has been done? Can He disburden us from the accumulations of guilty years, and make them as though they had never been? Is not this beyond even the power of Omnipotence? No, my friends; and we confess that it is not, every time we say "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." This is the repeated promise of all Scripture. It is expressed by Isaiah: "Though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow: though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool." It is expressed by Jeremiah: "I will put my laws in their hearts, and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more." In the Book of Job, to indicate the completeness of the remission, God is represented as putting the sins of man into a bag, sealing it up, and casting them away for ever behind His back.

And in the New Testament we are told again and again that "the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins," that "He saves His people from their sins," that "He takes away our sins," that He cleanses us from their leprosy, that Christ was offered to bear the sins of many, that He lifts them up with Him to the tree of shame, that He tears the handwriting of ordinances which they violate, which was against us, and nails its rent fragments to His cross. He does a work for us, and a work in us. He provides a remedy for past sins, as well as reversing the principle from which they sprang.

4. Here, then, are the two priceless blessings offered you by the Gospel: forgiveness, which shall dissipate as a morning cloud your past transgressions; the new birth, which shall be to you a total change of nature and of life. Debtors, if you will, your debt is cancelled! Slaves of Satan, if you will, you are emancipated into a glorious liberty! Prisoners, if you will, your chains are broken, and you are delivered! Helpless, who have made yourselves helpless; there is strength to replace your moral feebleness, and give you back the privilege of pure and noble manhood. Leper, He says to you, "I will, be thou clean." Impotent man—long impotent—He says to thee, "Son be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven." You are con-

scious that sin is in your very members, warring against your very life ; how blessed it would be to become once more as an innocent child ! Well, God offers you—freely offers you—nay, even lovingly urges upon you, and implores you to accept, the unspeakable riches of the twofold blessing : forgiveness and renewal—restoration of former innocence, renewal of long-lost strength.

5. This remedy, observe, is offered to us through Christ alone. It is the divine gift of His Gospel. It is there, or it is nowhere. There is no pardon, no hope, no refuge for us in all the world, save in Jesus only. In none other is there salvation ; for there is none other name under heaven wherein we must be saved. By Him alone can the self-erected barrier between us and God be thrown down ; by Him alone can our guilty past be blotted out.

6. The beloved disciple, in this text and others, tells us what is the nature of the remedy which God in Christ has provided for us. It is the propitiation of Christ, and the advocacy of Christ ; but it is of the first only that I can speak in this address.

By the propitiation of Christ we mean the Atonement : our reconciliation to God. Ah ! my brethren, regard this as an infinite personal boon, not as a verbal doctrine. Accept it, do not reason about it. Use it as a gift for your own

salvation, not as the miserable shibboleth by which you test and condemn the orthodoxy of your neighbours. God did not give His own Son to die for us that we might make of His death a philosophy, or the watchword of a sect, or a party dogma to be hurled as an offensive missile at our brethren; no, but that we through Him might be saved. As a doctrine the Atonement has been frightfully distorted. The errors about the Atonement all spring from man's domineering conceit. He wants to *explain* the Atonement, which he cannot do; for God only meant us to *believe* it. The metaphors in which it is set forth indicate its results for us, not the inmost mystery which passeth all understanding. What the Atonement was as regards God we know not, neither can know. We cannot soar up into His eternal secrets with our miserable waxen wings; we cannot measure His unfathomable ocean with our little fingers. Respecting His mystery we only know that we cannot know; but as respects ourselves, we know that Christ's Atonement means forgiveness, deliverance, reconciliation, for all who have faith in Him.

7. St. John here tells us that Christ is the propitiation for our sins, and theologians have gone astray into all kinds of ignoble, impossible, and even horrible teachings about God, because, in its Pagan use, "to propitiate" means

to appease, by some present or sacrifice, a person who is angry. And so they have said, in vain and idle words, that the Father was angry, and that the Son "held up His blood before the flaming face of God"; or in still more revolting metaphor, that "Christ wiped away the red anger-spot from the brow of God." Respecting such language of pure heathendom by Christian teachers one can only say, Father, forgive them, for they know not what they say. But the sacred use of the word differs entirely from the Pagan use. Scripture never once, even in the Old Testament, talks of *propitiating God*. What it does talk of is *propitiating*—*i.e.*, showing mercy to—the *sinner*; and propitiating—*i.e.*, doing away with—the *evil of the sin*. Our Article, indeed, speaks of Christ "reconciling His Father unto us;" but the phrase is unwarranted by Scripture, which, on the contrary, talks of reconciling us to the Father. Man is reconciled to God, not God to man. The sole obstacle to Atonement is in man, and not in God; the obstacle is man's sin, not God's wrath. The love of God is always the same. He is unalterable, inalienable; but so long as sins are unforgiven, He cannot from His very nature treat them as though they were no sins, nor the impenitent sinner as though he were not sinful. The effect of the Atonement is not to change God who changeth not, but to change the

heart of the sinner, and to wipe away his sins.

And this is the meaning of St. John, when he says, "If we walk in the light, the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses"—*i.e.*, is ever cleansing—"us from all sin." In other words, if we are seeking God, loving God, trying to forsake sin and to conform ourselves to the will of God, if we are ever purifying ourselves and washing our robes in the blood of the Lamb (Rev. xxii. 14), we are experiencing the new birth, the saving change, and then we are being constantly sanctified by the blood of Christ. After the justification comes the sanctification. To use the language of the Mystics, "the white rose of purity grows on the same stem, and springs from the same root, as the red rose of pardon." And do not let the expression, the "blood of Jesus," lead you into all kinds of repellent language, and notions of Pagan expiation. By "the blood of Jesus" is meant the spirit, the essential life of Jesus; the phrase, in this context, scarcely ever alludes to the *physical* blood shed from the veins. The expression is explained by the constant clause in the Pentateuch, "the blood thereof, which is the life thereof." * When we

* See Gen. ix. 4; Dent. xii. 23; and especially Lev. xvii. 10-14, which should be rendered, "For as to the soul of all flesh, *its blood forms its soul*," and "the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof," as in R.V.

speak of salvation through the blood of Christ, we mean salvation by virtue of His life and of His death ; of His life made available for man by His death—made available to men, because He was the Son of man ; efficacious for men because He was the Son of God.* The Atonement of Christ was not wrought by the one act of the crucifixion, but was co-extensive with the whole work of Christ from His Incarnation to His session at the right hand of God. It is a complete error to insist crudely and mistakenly on the blood of Jesus as though it meant the material blood. The phrase is a vivid, picturesque, abridged description to imply not the agony of death, but “all Christ’s life, preserved and active beyond death.” When we speak of “the blood of Jesus,” we “touch dogma with pathos.” It is a graphic abbreviation by which we mean *the life* of Jesus, His life as the Son of man, and therefore communicable to men, and as the Son of God, and therefore all-sufficing for them. And His blood—that is the life poured out for us in infinite self-sacrifice—is ever cleansing us, cleansing us perpetually, and little by little, from all sin ; not from *sins* only—the daily cleansing from daily assuilingment ; but from *sin* which is their spring and principle in our corrupted selfhood.

* See Westcott, p. 35. To the note referred to I am deeply indebted,

The blood—that is, the essential life of Jesus—is at once the price by which we were purchased, and the power by which we are kept pure. By His death He completed our redemption: by His blood—*i.e.*, by the continuous efficacy of His life thus given for us—He cleanses us. To drink of His blood is, as Clement of Alexandria says, to partake of His immortality.

8. And Christ is “the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”* When Calvinism asserted that Christ had died only for the elect, it flew in the face of the most divine and precious truth in all Scripture, which again and again teaches us that Christ died for all. All may not embrace this great salvation, but “through all place, through all time it extends, as far as the need of it extends.” This universality of redemption was prefigured even by the Jewish High Priest who, on the Day of Atonement, was regarded as burning the incense, and offering the prayer, and sprinkling with blood the mercy-seat, not for the Jews only, but for all the race of man and all the universe of God. It is symbolized even in these days, when the Pope first issues from the Vatican, and in the name of Christ gives his blessing with uplifted hands, *Urbi et orbi*, to the city of Rome and to the world.

* See John xvii. 20-28; i. 29; iv. 26.

Quam late patet peccatum tam late propitiatio—the propitiation is as widely extended as the sin. Through the blood—*i.e.*, through the life and death and spirit of Christ—through the Divine life outpoured in self-sacrifice for us and upon us—all sin, and the sins of all, are atoned for ; if the salvation of all does not visibly take effect, the fault is not with God who longs to forgive, but with the unforgiven sinner who repels the fatherly heart that moves towards Him in mercy.

My friends, in this vast subject, where not only there is so much truth to be taught, but also such deplorable error and misconception to be removed, I have no time for further setting forth of the mighty meaning which these words involve ; only let me end with borrowing one illustration which may, I trust, make you feel what propitiation means, were it only by way of contrast.

There is a poem in the "*Légende des Siècles*," by the great poet Victor Hugo, called "*The Parricide*."* It gives a story of a great Danish king. One day, finding his father in deep slumber, unguarded, he slew him at one blow. Then he became a great king, always victorious, adding many isles to his kingdom, abolishing idolatry and its savage rites, destroy-

* It is briefly alluded to by the Bishop of Derry, "*Speaker's Commentary*, N.T.," iv. 306.

ing monsters, ruling for twenty years as a genius and a hero. As for his parricide, he had forgotten it ; he never repented of it ; he enjoyed the fruits of it ; no one knew anything about it. Ah ! but in Heaven, until repented of, it was recorded ; it was not, it could not be, forgotten.

Then he died. They laid his body in the great sarcophagus, and all men praised him, and they sang hymns, and the priests said that he was a saint, and that a perfume issued from his memory, and that they saw his soul in glory like a prophet at the right hand of God. But the soul of Canute had risen from its tomb, and had wandered, sword in hand, to Mount Savo, and asked the mountain to let him cut a shroud from its mantle of snow to cover him with the hue of innocence ; and having cut the white shroud, he asked the mountain, "How shall I find my way to God ?" "I know not," said the mountain ; "I am here." And in his snowy shroud the soul, naked, a king without a kingdom, facing the darkness and the infinitude, and hearing the low moan of the wave of universal night, said, "This is the tomb ; God is beyond." And he called aloud ; but there was no answer. And secure in his snow-white shroud of innocence, he advanced ; when suddenly he saw something falling from heaven like a black star, and touching it with his spectral hand he found

that a drop of blood had fallen on him from heaven, and had incarnadined his white robe. He looked into the night, but saw nothing; and advanced with his proud head upraised. A second drop fell and spread on the snowy shroud; and still he looked into the darkness and saw nothing. A third fell. Canute had never fled before, but now he turned aside to the right; and again a drop of blood fell on his hand. Again he changed his course to the left, and again a drop of blood fell on his white shroud. And he started back, and shuddered to be alone, and thought that he would reseek his tomb; and then another drop fell, and he grew livid with terror, and bowed his head, and tried to pray; but the prayer died away on his lips, and again he stepped forward; and again a drop of blood fell implacably out of the darkness, and another, and another, and another, from the funereal heavens, till the king's soul trembled like a sere leaf in the wind, and at last he felt that he was marching amid a cloud of blood—the blood of his unrepented parricide, the crimson stain of his unforgiven sins—falling on him noiselessly and without end, until, stumbling forward through the tideless wave of night, he arrived at a closed gate; and from beneath it came a gleam, and beyond it Hosannas sounded. But that gate he dared not enter, for now

his snowy mantle was all red and defiled with blood ; and he dared not face the light in the horrible defilement of those crimson stains. And he stayed outside in the darkness, and from the black heaven there eve dropped upon his head the defiling blood of parricide, the scarlet pollution of unrepented, unforgiven, unpropitiated guilt.

My friends, how if the terrible dream of the poet could turn out, in some form or other, to be true for you ? How, if the scarlet stains of unforgiven iniquity should fall on your soul, which you would fain think so immaculate and white ?

They passed before my threshold,
The lost souls one by one ;
I watched them from the daybreak
Unto the set of sun.

I said, " My soul's unshaken,
Because I have not sinned,
Surely they reap the whirlwind
They who have sown the wind."

The burden of their failure,
It was no more my own,
Than a far-distant struggle
Lost in a land unknown.

* * * * *
Till, it seemed, a sudden shadow
Over my threshold crossed ;
And I knew the play was ended,
And my own soul was lost.

My friends, does any soul among you shudder lest, like that spectral king, you should

wander, with your sins like crimson, in that
 • defiling darkness, not daring to enter the world
 of God's pure radiance; not daring to step
 out of the circle of the indistinguishable night?
 Ah! in vain will you ignore or deny your sins;
 in vain will you ask the mountains to fall on
 you, the hills to cover you; in vain will you ask
 from priest or potentate some shroud of his im-
 maculate white snow.* It is not in such white
 robes that you can walk, and be undefiled.
 You may be a religionist, a zealous Pharisee,
 an indignant hunter after the heresies of others,
 an unscrupulous intriguer for your own Church
 party, but, sin impenitent, sin unconfessed to
 God, sin unforsaken—alas! alas! it is, and it
 must be, sin unforgiven; nor can any melting
 • snow-shroud of human absolution or human
 oblivion cover it. Against such sin the sen-
 tence of death stands unrepealed. Ah! do not
 be deceived. You may deceive the world by
 shams; you may completely deceive yourself
 by shams; but God you cannot deceive. He
 needs sincerity, not shams; reality, not pre-
 tence; holiness, not churchmanship; right-
 eousness, not party orthodoxy; life, not pro-

* Dante forcibly illustrates this truth in the story of Guido da Montefeltro, and the "swart cherub" argues as Thomas Aquinas does (Summ. iii. qu. 26, art. 2):

Ch' assolver non si può chi non si pente.

Inferno, xxvii. 118.

fession. But for you there is a propitiation—a cleansing from all sin—a voice to say to you as you stand trembling before the Accuser at the awful bar, “Take away the filthy garments from him, and clothe him with change of raiment.” For you there is a blood of sprinkling, which is life, and which

Has this might,
That being red, it maketh red souls white.

That is St. John’s message to you. Candid confession, amendment by Christ’s strength, faith in Christ’s redemption—these are the conditions. “If we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us from all sin.” “If any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sin; and not for ours only, but also for the whole world.”

VII.

Christ our Advocate.

“My little children, these things write I unto you that ye may not sin. And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins.”—1 JOHN ii. 1, 2.

ALTHOUGH I am endeavouring to bring before you the theology of St. John—*i.e.*, the aspect in which the scheme of salvation presented itself to the mind of the disciple whom Jesus loved—yet I trust we have all felt that we are considering not theology, but life; not a scheme, but a Gospel.

Sweeping aside the misrepresentations of vain theologies, we have tried to see the true nature of this atonement, this propitiation. We cut at the root of the error that it is the propitiation of an angry God, showing that that is sheer Paganism, and that Scripture never once speaks of propitiating God,* but of propitiating—*i.e.*, showing mercy to—the sinner; and propitiating—*i.e.*, neutralizing—the sin.

1. And here, perhaps, you will ask, Will not

* Zech. vii. 2. is no exception.

this propitiation suffice? Do we need anything beyond it? It is enough for the forgiveness of sins; it is Christ's full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, offering, and oblation, offered once, and once for all, for our sins and for the whole world. But we need something more than forgiveness, we need reconciliation, we need strength. With the obliteration of the guilty past, we need help in the weak, drifting present. Forgiveness for yesterday would be but unavailing if it left us impotent to-day. And so St. John says, "These things I write that ye may not sin;" yet, knowing the frailty of our mortal nature, and that by ourselves we cannot stand upright, he adds, "And if any man sin, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous." Note that the tender mercies of the world are cruel even to the good; and the theology of the Pharisee is hard even to the penitent; but that the loving mercy of God is extended even to sinners, the unthankful and the evil. There were two bodies of Christian schismatics—the Montanists and the Novatians—who denied any forgiveness from the Church to any one who after baptism had committed a mortal sin. Not so the disciple whom Jesus loved. If any man sin, he says—What? Is he then to be given up? Is his case hopeless? Is there no more forgiveness of sins? Are God's mercies exhausted, and is he

abandoned to a hopeless, endless, unpitied fate? Does nothing remain for us—seeing that we all sin, and all have sinned—but a certain frightful expectance of judgment, and of devouring flame? Not so, says the beloved disciple, but we have still an Advocate—a Paracle'te—one called to our side to plead for us in the presence of the Eternal Father.

2. Now, I would fain show you that such an advocacy is the necessary completion of Christ's work, the necessary supply of our needs.

i. It is the necessary completion of Christ's work.

For, first, if we possessed but the historic fact that Jesus died for us, the history would soon sink into a memory, to be only kept alive by externals, by magic, by ecclesiastical mechanism. Our faith is indeed an historic faith, but woe would be unto us were it historic only, and if its historic memories were not vivified into life and power by an Eternal Presence, by a Divine personality.

And, secondly, if Christ's propitiation stood alone, it would soon be, as indeed it too much has been, identified exclusively with His death; whereas every view of the Atonement is false which does not make it co-extensive with *all* His work.

And, thirdly, if His propitiation stood alone, there would be more excuse than there has been

for the fatal error of Christendom, in adoring so exclusively the Dead, while they forget so entirely the Living, Christ. This exclusive thrusting into realistic prominence of the Dead Christ was no part of primitive Christianity, but a corruption of Christianity in ages of usurping priestcraft and deadliest superstition. It was at its zenith amid that dark mediævalism, which deserves the name of the age of ignorance rather than the "age of faith." For the ever-living Christ of to-day, the Middle Ages substituted a priestly system meant to take the place of the vanished Christ of a thousand years ago. Not so in the true days of primitive Christianity. In the Catacombs Christ is represented at first in symbol only, and then always as joyous, youthful, majestic, loving, triumphant. Except in such symbols Christians did not even venture to paint Christ at all till the fourth century ; nor to adopt the Latin Cross till past the middle of the fifth century ; nor to paint a *Dead* Christ till the tenth century ; nor to paint a crucifixion otherwise than *symbolically* till the twelfth century ; nor commonly to adopt the portable crucifix till later still. And with this universal exclusive substitution of the dead for the living Christ—with the not Christian but mediæval, not scriptural but monastic, attribution of "sacramental efficacy to bodily pain"—with this thrusting of sin and anguish into that central

prominence which the Gospel gives, not to sin but to God, and not to anguish but to peace, and hope and joy—with the crucifix thrust by black-robed friars into the face of burning saints who held the free truth, which the Inquisition would have fain crushed into slavery—came in an hysterical sentimentality, and a sickly, effeminate, self-torturing religionism. With this perversion of the true faith came in what racks, and thumbscrews, and gibbets, for true Christian men; what severity of precept, what callosity of feeling, what mercilessness of obligation, what dark, dishonouring, degrading thoughts of God; what sweeping across the world of hurricanes of cruelty and lust from which only the few escaped! hurricanes as unchecked as now they are in corrupted France and ignorant Spain, by the sham barricades of sacerdotal materialism. And these ages forgot so completely that Christ was their one Advocate that they flew far more to the unwarranted, human, inefficacious advocacy of the Virgin Mother, and all sorts of dubious saints. Such a turning from God to men was an aberration, pardonable only because of its invincible ignorance. Blaspheming the Son of God, it approached dead men, as though they were more tender, more placable than our Divine Redeemer; and, blaspheming God, it treated Christ as a merciful protector from the wild Moloch-wrath which it en-

throned on the throne of Heaven, in the place of that loving Father, whose tender mercies are over all His works ; and, blaspheming Christ and God alike, it represented them as saving the world at the intercession of the Virgin, or of St. Francis of Assisi !

ii. Thus we needed Christ's advocacy as the eternal fulfilment of Christ's work ; and we needed it no less because of our own continual sinfulness. If, indeed, we have once, with all our hearts, accepted Christ's propitiation for the forgiveness of past sins, and the regeneration of our guilty state, then "he that is bathed needeth not save to wash his feet." But he does need, even the best saint needs, that daily purification from daily defilements. He does need, the best saint needs, a continual advocacy for the frailty which can never pass into sinlessness. If we say, even we who are Christians, that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. We sin in words—oh, how often ! in thought—oh, how often ! in deed—oh, how often ! We sin by continuous omission ; we sin by constant commission. We sin—oh, how universally—by want of zeal and activity ; and—oh, how yet more universally—by want of love ! We have been forgiven ; but we need fresh forgiveness, not once only, but seventy times seven. Our debt is paid, but we are ever incurring fresh debts. We have been

redeemed from the fatal dungeon, but we are ever sinking back from our glorious liberty. We have been reconciled to God, but again and again our sins hide His face from us. If we had no Divine Advocate to plead for us continually, how could we stand in the presence of Him who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity? of Him who chargeth even His angels with folly, and in whose sight the very heavens are not clean?

iii. And again we need the eternal perfect Advocate because we have a powerful continuous accuser. His very name, "Satan," means that he is the accuser of the brethren. We want no illustration of such an accuser. Nominal Christians may find hosts of accusers among themselves, to whom, in their sects and their parties, no less than in that which is called society, the "thou shalt not" must have been omitted at Sinai from the ninth commandment. Take the case of the saints or reformers in all ages who have scorned to swim with the smooth-gliding, vulgar, fashionable stream; who have spurned from them the favourite idols, and been compelled by conscience to reject the shibboleths of their contemporaries, and see how even such men as Athanasius, Basil, Chrysostom, Jerome, Augustine, Isidore, Bernhard, Thomas Aquinas, Luther, Fénelon, Wesley, Whitfield, Maurice, have been mis-

represented and vilified. Read, and if you are a Christian read with proper scorn, the immoral monotony of unscrupulous malediction with which the nominal Church has embittered the lives of many saints of God. There is Satan wearing, as he so often does in the religious world, the vestments of the priest and the broad phylacteries of the Pharisee. Judge from such accusers of their brethren who from the days of Christ, as Christ prophesied, have hated the best and truest of His disciples, what the Arch-Satan will be when we stand in the stained garments of our lives before the bar of God, and at our right hand that incarnation of lying malignity to bear witness against us. Ay! but think how it will be when every accusation of his, instead of being indignantly repudiated by a conscience void of offence, will be echoed from the millionfold reverberating caverns of a conscience guilty and self-accusing! How well does the poet say:

"Tis not the babbling of an idle world,
Where praise and censure are at random hurled,
That can the meanest of my thoughts control
Or shake one settled purpose of my soul!
Free, and at large, might their wild curses roam
If all alas! if all were well at home!

Ah! pity, pity on him, into whose naked open heart, unconcealed by the ephod, unprotected by the phylacteries of a hollow profession, burns

the revealing aching splendour of that pure Eye which is ten thousand times brighter than the sun; woe to him, and woe unutterable, if he have then no Advocate, no voice to plead his cause!

3. But (blessed be God for His unspeakable gift!), though there be no indefectible grace, yet "if any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins." Do not let us go astray again, and imagine some difference in the degree of love and mercy between the Father and the Son. The feebleness of human language must not be pressed into exorbitant inferences as though the Father only were just, and the Son only merciful. We know that "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, not to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved." Do not ignorantly and blasphemously imagine the Lord Christ as pleading with one who is hard to be appeased; nay, but Christ's very being, His very presence, the distinct indivisible eternity of His divine humanity—they are His advocacy, and in them the full image of His Father shines. And He is our Advocate, Jesus Christ the righteous. An Advocate, how perfect, how efficacious! Jesus—and therefore in sympathy with us. And Christ, the anointed Son of God, and therefore

no mere trembling man ; no poor, empty, vain ignorant priest, guilty as ourselves, impotently usurping and feebly aping the powers which belong to Omnipotence alone ; but one who, being co-equal with God and co-eternal, does not stand as before a judge, but has sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. And Jesus Christ the righteous ; let the epithet correct the fictions of a theology, which, taking its ignorance for knowledge, represents the Atonement as some fantastic forensic fiction ; or some hardly-bargaining legal satisfaction ; or some bloody Pagan expiation exacted by implacable vengeance ; or some division between the Persons of the Trinity ; or some conflict between antagonistic attributes of God the Father ; or some specious trick to set aside the eternal law. No ; the Atonement is God's loving purification and regeneration of our fallen nature, and the advocacy is the eternal application of that Atonement to turn us from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God.

4. Now, as I tried to enable you vividly to realize the propitiation of Christ in the only way in which it can be realized—namely, in its effects towards us ; so let me now try to illustrate to you the advocacy of Christ, as alone it can be realized—namely, in the way in which it affects ourselves.

i. In the year 387, the great Christian Emperor Theodosius laid a tax upon Antioch, and the frivolous people of the city and all its congregated scum and scoundrelism thronged its chief square in aimless turbulence. The executive authorities were weak and timid. Sophisticated by the perpetual noise of blatant demagogues, they had no nerve to act. At last a mischievous boy flung a stone which struck the statue of the Emperor. It only needs some chance act like that to wake the devil of mischief which is ever busy in the heart of mobs; and the "lewd fellows of the baser sort," who formed the mass of the multitude, at once began to pelt, and then to tear down and smash, and drag through the mire of the city streets, not only the statue of the Emperor, but also of his noble and beloved father, of his sons, Arcadius and Honorius, and of the sweet and holy Empress, whom he had so tenderly loved and so recently lost. After their silly outburst, with the usual cowardice of mobs, they fled headlong before a single company of archers. The next day they came to their senses. They knew that the strong Spanish soldier Theodosius was not a man to be trifled with, and that his anger was terrible. They knew with what savage wrath he had punished a far less insulting riot at Thessalonica, by summoning all its inhabitants to the Amphitheatre and then letting loose his soldiery upon them to

the indiscriminate massacre of seven thousand souls. They knew that the last offence he would be likely to pardon would be the gross insult to the gentle Christian wife whom he had loved. Remorse and terror followed their brutal petulance. In trembling agony they awaited the stroke of retribution. What would the Emperor do? Would he degrade the proud city on the Orontes from all her ancient privileges? Would he hand it over to conflagration, slaughter, and pillage? Would he order it to be razed to its foundations, and the plough to be driven over its ruins? There was but one authority which could afford them even the shadow of protection—the solemn intercession of the Church, if pleaded by Flavian, their venerable Bishop. And so they took the old man from the bedside of his dying sister, and sent him travelling day and night for eight hundred miles, through the wild winter, from Antioch to Constantinople. Happily he overtook the messenger who bore the dreadful tidings of the sedition, who had been detained by the snow which blocked the passes of Mount Taurus; and during the many days which must elapse before their agony of suspense could be removed, while the ringleaders were being punished, and even boys were burnt or thrown to the wild beasts, the trembling citizens awaited their doom. Meanwhile their advocate, the white-haired Bishop, had reached the capital, and standing

far off, with bent head, and streaming tears, and his face covered with his hands, he pleaded passionately with the Emperor for mercy, the same mercy to others which he himself desired of God. The heart of Theodosius was touched, he forgave the terrible wrong ; and Antioch, relieved from its stupor of anguish, welcomed back her intercessor with shouts of gratitude, into streets bright with torches and hung with garlands.* —As was the guilty city, so in the eye of the Eternal Justice is the guilty world ; but instead of a weak human advocate, our Advocate is the Son of God.

ii. And the Jewish ordinances show us the faint shadow of an Advocate with God.† Once every year in the majestic ritual of the great Day of Atonement, after elaborate cleansings, arrayed from head to foot in white linen, the High Priest entered into the darkness of the Holiest, placed between himself and the Ark the golden censer burning with fragrant incense, sprinkled on the mercy-seat the blood which typified a surrendered life : uttered, on that occasion only, the awful incommunicable Name, and after completing the purification of the whole Temple, sent forth into the wilderness the scapegoat over whose

* The writer may refer to his "Lives of the Fathers," ii. 482-487.

† See Heb. ix. 24-28.

head he had confessed the sins of the whole nation. On that day he appeared before God for the people ; and returned in his golden and jewelled robes to appear before the people for God ; and we are told that the vast multitudes assembled in the Great Court of the Temple ever awaited him in awful suspense, and that from the mighty heart of the populace there burst a sob of unutterable relief when he, their ambassador to the Holiest, issued forth to tell them of their atonement perfected, of their sins forgiven, having as it were seen God and lived.

And yet this splendid ceremonial was but the dimmest shadow of our Advocate with the Father ; a Man to sympathise with us, God to help us and to make intercession for us. No priest was He, robed only in symbolic innocence ; no offerer of a blood which could not purge the conscience from dead works ; no, but in His perfect sinlessness, with His own blood, that is with the perfect sacrifice of His vivifying life, He passes into the Eternal Presence, so that in His Person our glorified human nature might sit for ever upon the sapphire throne. Henceforth for every one of us the way is open, the parting veil has been for ever rent in twain. We need no poor, dying, guilty, human priest to obtain access for us to God ; no coarse material sacrifice ; no feeble human intervention. We are all priests to God, if we do not, like Esau, abjectly

sell the priesthood which is our birthright. We are all priests, to offer to God the only sacrifices which any priest can offer—the sacrifices of our praise and thanksgiving; the sacrifice of our gifts to the cause of God; the sacrifices of a contrite spirit; the sacrifices of ourselves, our souls and bodies to God, and to His service. No human priest has one atom more of right to enter into the very Holy of Holies—into the inmost Presence and Audience-chamber of the Eternal God—than has every one of us, with that perfect confidence inspired, not by these our sacrifices, but because Christ Himself clothes us with His righteousness, and makes His righteousness our own, and makes our sacrifices acceptable because of His one perfect and finished sacrifice. Nor do we need any other intercessor, or any other Advocate—neither Pope, nor Bishop, nor Priest, nor Saint, nor Virgin—because we have an Advocate with the Father Jesus Christ the righteous, and He is the propitiation for our sins. His advocacy is no encouragement to sin. God forbid! For when we think of Him, and of all that He may be to us, and of all that He has done for us, sin ought to become specially revolting to our thoughts. No, it is not an encouragement to sin, but an all-powerful remedy against despair; it is a comfort in all Christian weakness, an inspiration for all Christian strength.

And so we await Him still. He died, but He ever liveth. He hath passed away from us, but He is here. And when the last hour hath come, when the still shadow hath reached its appointed line on the dial-plate of Eternity, He shall come once more to judge the world, and to give unto every man according as his work shall be. Oh, may we then be found cleansed by His propitiation, forgiven by His intercession, safe in His advocacy; washed, justified, sanctified, accepted in the Beloved. Which of you does not feel the need of this? Which of you will not pray for this to God with all your hearts? Have you not all sinned? St. John's teaching is meant to keep us back from sin; but "if any man sin"—if any man, though he sin, is yet sincerely struggling against sin—if any man confess his wickedness and be sorry for his sin—"we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous; and He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only, but also for the whole world."

VIII.

Tests of the Efficacy of Redemption for Ourselves.

THE FIRST TEST—KNOWLEDGE, GAINED BY OBEDIENCE.

“And hereby know we that we know Him, if we keep
His commandments.”—1 JOHN ii. 3.

IF any one of us has perchance tried to follow with seriousness the course of St. John's teaching, he ought by this time to have a clear conception of what is the message of the Gospel as it is delivered by the disciple whom Jesus loved. Is it not worth while to understand that message? Do we know of anything more deserving of our attention? Could we find a greater or worthier teacher? Has the world sufficed us? Have the allurements of sin given us any rest or satisfaction? And if not; if our own unworthiness has made us weary at heart and disappointed—must we, then, abandon all hope of happiness, and must the future be only the drearier reproduction of the twice-told tale of

the present? So it must be if we have no Gospel to fall back upon. So it must be if we have sinned, and there be no such thing as the forgiveness of sins. But not so, if we listen to the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. He can save us. He offers us, through St. John, His two inestimable boons of life through faith, and of fellowship with God. Guilty and self-deceiving as we are, and unlike Him who is Spirit, Light, Love--burdened as we are, and stained and fettered--yet because Jesus Christ the Son of God is our propitiation and our Advocate, the debt is paid; the bars of iron are smitten asunder; the scarlet stains are white as snow. We ought now to understand what is meant by this perfect propitiation, by this divine advocacy; but next comes the tremendous question, "Is all this anything at all to me? To have life in God, to have fellowship with God, I must know God. Do I know Him? and if so, how do I know that I know Him?"

Now to enable us to answer this question, St. John proceeds to give us two tests whereby we can recognize whether the divine remedy for sin is efficacious for our individual souls. For if it is not so felt to be efficacious, it may be only, at the best, like the voice of a pleasant song; or it may be a mere recognized convention; or, worst of all, it may have become to us an hypo-

critical survival, an exploded dream. One or other of these things—a fancy, a sham, a falsehood—it must be to us if it be not an intense reality; if it be not our hope, our comfort, our creed of creeds, our life of lives.

1. Do we know God? The knowledge often comes in one flash of awful recognition which we call conversion. Those who have experienced this birth-throe of the new life can say, "It was then that I first knew God. I had heard of Him before by the hearing of the ear, but then mine eye saw Him." It was so when Jacob, wrestling with the angel, said, "Tell me thy name?" It was so when St. Peter burst forth with the confession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." It was so when St. Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God!" It was so when St. Paul cried in his blinding anguish, "Lord, what wouldest thou have me to do"? And if we have once known God, the effects of that knowledge can never be wholly obliterated. I do not say that we may never have seasons of weakness, of what the saints called spiritual dryness, even of the deepest despondency. I do not say that we may not sometimes seem to ourselves to be backsliding altogether. Yet certainly most often, when the dawn of the Sun of righteousness has shone in the human heart, it brightens more and more unto the perfect day.

2. Hereby then, says John, we may recognize that we know Him. What is the test? To be a nominal Christian, to have been baptized, to be a member of the Church? By no means! It was to the baptized, it was to nominal Christians, that St. Paul said, "Some have not the knowledge of God; I speak this to move you to shame." Is it so with us? How may every soul find out what must be the individual answer to that which is the most solemn question of all life, "Do I know God?"

3. St. John gives two plain decisive tests: one is in the text I read to you. "Hereby," he says, "we recognize that we have come to know Him if we observe His commandments." The first test, then, is nothing superfine; nothing transcendental; nothing disputable; but just simple, plain obedience. The love of a true child for its parents is not shown by fondling and talking; the truest, deepest love is not demonstrative, not sentimental, not emotional. It is shown by meeting the parents' wishes, and trying to fulfil their hopes; and so Cordelia loves King Lear better than Regan and Goneril. And the second test which St. John furnishes is, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also to walk even as He walked." It is the test of union shown by following Christ's example. At present I only have to make plain to you the first test. You would fain know whether you

do indeed know God, whom to know is love and life. Well, you know God, if you keep His commandments.

4. "Keep His commandments." The verb is not the ordinary verb, *φυλάσσειν*, "to keep," but *τηρεῖν*, "to observe." It is not to keep the commandments as we keep a dead deposit; not to keep them as the slothful servant kept his talent hid in a napkin. A father wrote to his sons a letter full of loving advice which, if obeyed, would, he knew, secure their success and happiness. One of his sons glanced at the letter and then conceitedly tore it up. He was not going to be guided by it; he should do as he liked. Another son read it, not wholly unmoved, but threw it into a dusty drawer, where he never looked at it again, and soon almost forgot its existence. A third son treated the letter itself with ostentatious respect, but while he observed its outward directions acted in constant contradiction to its spirit. A fourth read it with a heart full of love, and eyes suffused with tears; and placed it in his Bible, and studied it often; and tried to follow its advice; and thought of it till it had become to him a message of love engraved upon the tablets of his heart. Which of these four, think you, *kept* his father's letter? Now the kind of keeping which St. John means is not the first, which was like Esau's or Jonah's way; nor the second, which was like the way of

the slothful servant, who kept his master's talent hid in a napkin ; nor the third, which was the way of the Scribes and the Pharisees ; but the fourth, which is the way of those who know God, and are the children of the resurrection. We know God if we keep His commandments, not merely as a dead deposit, but with a watchful heed ; with a living observance ; in the spirit as well as in the letter ; not with the listless unloving necessity of slaves, but with the joy of good sons towards a healthful and life-giving law.

5. None of us then, be our religious views what they may, can escape this clear exhaustive issue—we know God if we keep His commandments. But which commandments ? “Commandments” means the precise definite rules of our Father, which, if we love Him, we shall obey. But which definite rules ? What answer do you expect ? My friends, do not, like Naaman, be indignant if you do not hear some great thing. The answer is not one of recondite theology, or ecclesiastical partisanship. Do you want me to tell you that you must fast twice in the week ? that you must make long prayers ? that you must give tithes of mint and anise and cummin ? that you must make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter ? Well, if you want by way of answer the commandments of men, those of Christ will not be half enough for you. They will be quite deficient in theology and in

churchliness. But ah! do not deceive yourselves. God wants grapes from His vineyard, not wild grapes. If you really believe in Christ you must take His answer; and what He ordains is not the leaning on any feeble human arm, or the self-satisfactions of outward service, which, in all forms of religious life, are quite consistent with wilfulness, egotism, intrigue, disobedience to parents, specious dishonesty, inward corruption, envious hatred, and whispering falsehood; no, but one test desperately simple, and desperately sincere, and from which neither mask, nor phylactery, nor membership of a Church, nor zeal for a faction, can let you escape—namely, obedience. In Christ Jesus no Judaism, whether of the first or the nineteenth century, is of the smallest efficacy. “Circumcision availeth nothing,” says St. Paul thrice over, and “uncircumcision availeth nothing;” but a new creature; but the keeping of the commandments of God; but faith working by love. In Christ Jesus the kingdom of God standeth not in professions and ceremonies, but is righteousness, peace, and joy in believing. In Christ Jesus the end of the commandment is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience, and faith unfeigned. Nothing can exceed the absolute plainness, the reiterated simplicity of Christ’s teaching. A child, a wayfaring man, a fool can understand it. “If ye love me,” He

says—what? go into the desert? shut yourself up in a monastery? spend your days in the vain repetition of formal prayers? No! but—"If ye love me, keep my commandments." Nothing at all resembling what whole generations of religious teachers have put in the foreground; no, but just simply, "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." And let us build up no vain superstructures on the word "commandments," as though through that wicket gate you could teach for doctrines any number of non-essential ordinances; for, to render that subterfuge impossible, when the young ruler asked our Lord "which commandments?" He answered him just the ten—which are the two—Thou shalt not kill; Thou shalt not commit adultery; Thou shalt not steal; Thou shalt not bear false witness. Thou shalt not covet. "How commonplace!" you will say; "how elementary! how extremely ordinary! why I learnt all that years ago by my mother's knee; I have got quite beyond all that." Ah! but have you? Like the Pharisee, you may not be an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer; but have you, even in man's judgment, kept, in all their divine breadth, the law of kindness; the law of purity; the law of honesty; the law of truth; the law of contentment? Have you loved God with all the heart? Have you loved your neighbour as yourself?

Would that there were a greater multitude of Christians who could stand this test; who could be really *trusted* for honesty and straightforwardness; who rose conspicuously above the vulgar standard of the world, or proved that they possess the grace of charity. I fear that many do not love these plain truths of the Gospel. Yet it is to the neglect of them—to that and nothing else—that the supreme inefficiency of our modern Christianity is due. Organizations* may flourish, and societies may be multiplied. The Church of England may grow more and more active in outward effort. But so long as men of supreme and obvious spirituality are few; so long as Christians can show nearly every vice of worldlings; so long as humility and love are nearly as rare in the Church as in the world:—so long will the world be untouched, so long the lapsed masses be unreclaimed. Let the Church show true men—men like Lord Shaftesbury, men like General Gordon, men like Commander Goodenough; and, simple laymen though they were, the world—in admiration, if not in imitation—will be ready to make the whole hierarchy stand bareheaded before them. But at mere external observances and multiplied functions, the world will only look on as at a show. By such things it will not be moved. It will not be converted. It will shrug its shoulders

and go its way. Let the Church of England produce one Francis of Assisi, one John Howard, one William Penn, one George Whitefield, one Thomas Clarkson—not, I mean, in their “views” or their “theology,” or their special form of sectarianism, whether within or without the Church, but in their lives—and more will be won back to her fold than by any amount of controversial dogma or archæological revival.

And, therefore, *Lascia dir le genti*, let others talk; but thou, if thou hast in thee one throb of repentance, one gleam of faith; if thou wouldst at all enter into life; if thou wouldst put thy foot on the lowest round of that golden ladder which leads to God; if thou desirest to escape the peril lest the heart’s blood of thy religion—the blood thereof, which is the life thereof—should be crushed out under the leaden cloak of a gilded hyprocrisy; if thou wouldst be dear to God rather than praised of men—then keep the commandments. Hast thou begun with that? Hast thou begun even to begin with that? Are you loving and obedient to parents? Are you pure in your lives? Are you kind, and fair, and honest in your words and in your actions? If not, what will all else avail you? Until you have learnt to plant firm feet on those green lower slopes—if, indeed, you think them lower—how can

you breathe the difficult air, or stand in the sunrise on the splendour of the heights? Do you think that it is of any use to call yourself a Christian, and not to be a Christian? To say, "I go, sir," and not to go? Do you think that at the solemn bar of judgment you will be asked about your *isms* and your *ologies*? your observances or theories? If you are base, or unclean, or false, or saturated with envies, do you think that it will avail you to have said, "Lord, Lord"? If you doubt my word, take that of all the Saints, all the Apostles, of Christ Himself. Hear Moses: "And now, Israel, what doth the Lord thy God require of thee, but . . . to walk in His ways?" Hear Samuel: "Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice." Hear David: "Keep innocency, and do the thing that is right." Hear Hosea: "I will have mercy and not sacrifice." Hear Jeremiah: "I spake not unto your fathers concerning burnt offerings; but this thing I commanded them, saying, Obey my voice." Hear Amos: "I hate, I despise your feast days . . . but let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." Hear Isaiah: "Bring no more vain oblations, incense is an abomination unto me . . . Cease to do evil, learn to do well." Hear Micah: "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but

to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Hear St. John the Baptist: "Bring forth fruits meet for repentance." Hear St. John the Evangelist: "Blessed are all they that do His commandments." Hear St. James, the Lord's brother: "Be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." And if you will not hear all the sixty-six books of Holy Scripture, hear the Lord Jesus Himself: "If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments." The heresy of all heresies of which teachers and Churches have been guilty, has been the thrusting of religious opinions and religious observances into greater prominence than moral purity. But beliefs unexceptionally orthodox are compatible with the life of devils, who believe and tremble; and rituals consummately precise may be performed by priests, who have

Turned atheists, as did Eli's sons, who filled
With lust and violence the house of God.

If, then, St. John, or his Gospel, or the Gospel in general, or the forgiveness of sins, or Christ, or your soul's salvation, or indeed anything really sacred beyond the mere sect or party to which you adhere, be anything to you, try yourselves by the Apostle's standard: "You know God if you are keeping His commandments; if not, you

know Him in nowise." If you be wise you will give heed to these things. Have you an enemy? Then this very day forgive him. Have you wronged, or are you wronging, another? Then this very day make him restitution. Are you a slanderer or a systematic depreciator of your brethren? Then cease to speak evil, and fling your unhallowed pen into the fire. Are you in debt? Live on bread and water rather than continue in that dishonesty. Are you idle? Go home and earn your own bread by the sweat of your brow. Are you a swearer? Conquer at all costs that profane and senseless habit. Are you a better or a gambler? Tear up your betting-book, and abandon that brainless and degrading excitement. Are you getting fond of drink? Then loose the grip upon you of that devil's hand of flame by taking the pledge. Are you living two lives, of which one is a mere self-deceiving hypocrisy? Then tear off your own mask, and in tears before Christ's throne entreat Him to make you true. Are you stained through and through with impurity? Then come with that leprosy to Him whose answer to the leper's cry, "Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean," came like an echo, "I will, be thou made clean."

So shall you feel in yourselves the blessing of Christ's propitiation, the strength of His

advocacy. So shall you enjoy the two promised beatitudes of life through faith and fellowship with God. For so shall you meet St. John's first test: "And hereby we know that we know Him, if we keep His commandments."

IX.

The Second Test of our Knowing God.

UNION WITH CHRIST SHOWN BY IMITATION.

"He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked." 1 JOHN ii. 6.



I HAVE tried to bring before you St. John's first test by which we may know whether or not we know God—the test of obedience. I cannot tell what more practical, what more supremely needed, and yet more neglected truth could have been preached to you. Did any of you, my friends, take it home to your hearts? Or did you get rid of it by some trivial and frivolous criticism of the preacher? Or did you explain it away by one of the numberless subterfuges which enable religious irreligion to persuade itself that it is godliness, and heathendom, venerated with convention, to take itself for Christianity? That responsibility rests with you, not with me. The preacher can but draw his feeble bow at a venture: God only can speed the arrow between the joints of the harness. I am but humbly following, in its order

and method, the teaching of the last and most deeply spiritual of the Apostles. It is not I who am even pretending to lead you by the hand into the understanding of the Gospel; it is the Angel of the Evangelists, St. John. The Bible is in your hands. You can follow me for yourselves and see. To the word and to the testimony, and, like the noble Bereans, search the Scriptures whether these things are so or not. If, in that setting forth of the Gospel, I leave out anything which other teachers may make prominent, it is because St. John leaves it out. If I enforce truths of which they make little or nothing, it is because St. John enforces them. He ought to know. He was almost the earliest convert, and quite the last survivor, of the Apostles; and he was "the disciple whom Jesus loved." We may be sure that he will set before us the whole counsel of God. He certainly will teach us what Christ deemed essential. If any man add to his teaching, or detract from it, I will not say, "Let him be anathema," for I know not rightly what that means; but I say that it is better ten thousandfold to go for guidance to the beloved disciple, than to St. Cyprian, or St. Augustine, or St. Thomas Aquinas, or Calvin, or Laud, or multitudes of other teachers, human and fallible, who have mixed their own dross with the fine gold of the Gospel of Christ.

2. We have seen that Christ was our propitiation; that Christ is our only Advocate. Is Christ's atoning blood—*i.e.*, is His life poured out for us and upon us—anything to us? Is Christ's eternal advocacy of any avail to us? If it is, we shall feel the fulfilment of the Gospel promises. If not, we shall but wander in the desert, and deceive ourselves with the mirage; or stumble on the dark hills, and take the misty dimness for God's light.

3. St. John has taught us that there are two tests by which we may judge. They are obedience, and imitation. Knowledge of God is shown by keeping His commandments; unity with Christ is proved by walking in His steps.

Why was it necessary for St. John to lay down two tests so plain, so unmistakable? Partly, because we are always going astray, and telling lies to ourselves and to God; partly because, even in that early day, men had sprung up who perverted and sophisticated the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, by the subtle egotism of self-assertion, and who preached another Jesus and a different Gospel. They were called by the broad general name of Gnostics, from *γνῶσις*, knowledge. They claimed a superior knowledge of God, by introducing an unauthorized and superfine Christianity—half Pagan in its theories, half Jewish in its burdensomeness, wholly idolatrous in its materialism. In the en-

deavour to establish this false system, they claimed to be personally exempt from the sovereign obligation of the moral law. They, being "Gnostics," might teach and defend disobedience to parents; they might indulge in glistening, softly spoken lies, and managements, and subterfuges; they might substitute the petty bye-laws of their own faction for the eternal laws of God; they might do vicious deeds, yet not be vicious. St. Paul describes them as well as St. John. He speaks of them as "forbidding to marry, and commanding to abstain from meats;" as going back from freedom to the beggarly elements of bondage; as holding the form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof; as creeping into houses and leading captive silly women laden with lusts. This deceitful Christianity was only the breaking out under new forms of the old leprosy of Pharisaism so deeply ingrained in the human heart. St. John does not trifle with it. He deals it a downright smashing blow. "He that saith I know Him," he says, "and keepeth not His commandments, is a liar, and there is no truth"—*i.e.*, no reality, no sincerity—"in him." In other words, his religion is no religion. It is a thing of names, and forms, and shams; it is a religion of the whited sepulchre, which shall shrivel up to nothing before one ray of God. When nominal Christians want to judge each other

they ask, Does he hold this or that view? does he use this or that form? does he belong to this or that party? These are man's tests---they are unknown to God. God's test is not, what does he think, but how does he live? Is he humble, just, fair, honest, pure? If he is not, God knows him not, though he say, Lord, Lord, hundreds of times at seven services every day. If he is, then though every priest that ever was refused him absolution, and every Council, Synod, and Convocation that ever was loaded the air with their anathemas against him; yea, though they burnt him, as Popes and Cardinals burnt Savonarola, and as the Council of Constance burnt John Huss; or scatter his ashes as they scattered to the winds and to the rivers the ashes of Wycliffe; and though they lied about him as many, thinking to do God service, still lie about Luther---he is mine, saith the Lord, and he shall be mine in that day when I make up my jewels. Of how many whom corrupt Churches and corrupt factions have banned and cursed might it be said, as the brother says of his sister in the great tragedy:

I tell thee, churlish priest,
A ministering angel shall my sister be,
When thou liest howling.

4. I linger on the lesson because we could find no lesson so searching. It is for all of us

a matter, not of sham or figment, but of life or death. It is now, and always has been, supremely needful. It is needful for guilty nations which desire to conceal the stagnancy of corruption under the iridescence of hypocrisy. It is needful for every individual soul which would fain hide and pride itself under a cheap and easy conformity. It is needful for every one of us, who, desiring sincerity above all things, would fain drive a ploughshare of fire through the trodden surface of our religious conventionalities, if so be the furrows may cease to bear the rank weeds of formalism, and wave with the golden grain of love and good works. Here is the one real test for you and me, and for England, and for the Church of England. Are we keeping—keeping not as a dead letter, or shattered tablets, or idle threatenings, but as a living word of God to us—those plain, unvarnished Ten Commandments, the laws of honour to parents, and honesty, and kindness, and purity, and truth, without which no matins or evensong are worth the scream of the jay or the murmur of the gnat ; without which no prayer is worth the breath which utters it, no pretence worth its mask, no Communion valid, no knowledge of God attainable except in false and idle name ?

5. And, indeed, St. John's second test of imitation—"he that saith that he abideth in Christ ought himself also to walk even as He

walked"—is but another and more searching form of the first. We cannot know God unless we are observing His commandments; we cannot be in Christ, we cannot abide in Christ, unless we follow in His footsteps. The test of knowledge is obedience; the test of abiding union is imitation.

6. "To walk as Christ walked!" Observe the infinite love and compassion of God our Father. He gave us His commandments, holy and just and good; but He gave us something more, even an example as to how we should obey them. His commandments were "a word of God;" but Christ is the very Word of God, and He set forth the rich and blessed universality of their meaning. We teach a child to write not only by showing him the shape of the letters, but by giving him letters over which he forms his own. Such a copy was Christ to us. St. Peter used the very word. That which we render "example" is *ὑπογραμμὸς*, the letters of that Divine word over which must be written the epistle of our lives. And with this St. Peter mingles the other metaphor of walking in Christ's steps. We know the old legend of the saintly king who went before his fainting page on the wintry night:

In his master's steps he trod
Where the snow lay dinted;
Heat was in the very sod
Which the saint had printed.

If we are to be with Christ, or in Christ—if we are to be Christians in more than name—we must imitate Christ, we must follow Him

7 And where are we to find the print of His footsteps the copy of His life? Where but in the New Testament in the Gospels, in the testimony of His chosen witnesses? Is it then an easy thing to understand how Christ walked? My friends, it is, and it is not. For some it is supremely easy, others have made it for themselves, and for all who take them as guides, supremely difficult. It is easy for the simple, for the sincere, for the true of heart, for all who have learnt the meaning of pure religion and undefiled, as it was taught by Christ and His Apostles, before the limpid stream of Christian simplicity had been puddled with all sorts of errors and traditions. It is not so easy if, deserting the true and only light for some human will-o'-the-wisp, we follow all the corruptions and aberrations which culminated in the Dark Ages, and have arrogantly usurped the name of Catholicity. There is no difficulty in knowing how Christ walked if we go straight to Him to tell us, if we sit at His feet, and not at the feet of that harlot of false religion, whose tyranny and whose manifold abominations have been the curse of Christianity and of Christendom.

Many Christians have at times wandered

from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. They have constructed a slave prison of grinding ordinances, and have called that Christ's freedom; they have hedged themselves round with exclusiveness, and called that His all-embracing Gospel; they have burnt and cursed, and tortured, and slandered in His name, and called that His love. They have deified "blasphemous fables and dangerous deceits," and called that orthodoxy. The prophets have prophesied falsely and the priests have ruled by their means, and many people love to have it so, and call that His truth. Nevertheless, there is no poor old ignorant woman starving in a garret, no young lad in an office, no simple hard-handed labourer, no wayfaring man so ignorant or so much a fool, who may not, with the single clue of absolute sincerity, walk in perfect safety among these labyrinths of error. For if any man love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity, the Lord will make His way plain before his face.

8. This test of sincerity in the imitation of Christ, is of course a subject far too vast for me to set forth in its fulness now, and one at least of its most essential elements must be developed in another address. I will now only point out four general facts, which may perhaps have their helpfulness for all who care to accept Christ's Gospel with a humble heart.

i. First, then, the imitation of Christ has

nothing to do with outward facts or circumstances. "Though we have known Christ after the flesh," says St Paul, "yet now we know Him so no more." "It is the Spirit that quickeneth," said our Lord; "the flesh profiteth nothing." Christ lived in Palestine, yet men like St Jerome found that they were no whit nearer to Him by fixing their abode at Bethlehem or Nazareth. Christ was poor, yet the wealthy Joseph of Arimathea, and the wealthy Nicodemus, were nearer to Him than Judas. Christ was homeless, yet the poor cobbler and the two poor washerwomen in their homes at Alexandria were nearer to Him than the hermits, Antony and Macarius. St Francis of Assisi tried, on the wild hills of Umbria, to reproduce the life that Christ lived on the burning fields of Galilee. He was sincere, and therefore he was blessed, but before a generation was over, the mendicant friars, who adopted his mode of life, became the pest of Europe. The imitation of Christ standeth not at all in outward things. In wealth or in deepest want, in rank or in utter lowliness, in a palace or a squalid garret, with ten talents or with but one, we may walk in His steps; nor is there any place, from the desert to the city, from the cathedral to the log hut on the prairie, nor any condition of life, from that of St. Louis the King to that of Santa Zita the maid-of-all-work, which has not been rendered

more lovely by the lives of the Saints of God. Their footsteps have illuminated life's deepest valleys, as well as shone upon its loftiest hills.'

ii. And, secondly, the imitation of Christ has nothing to do with minor differences of dogma in Christian communities. Churches and sects, in their wretched exclusiveness—because men think wickedly that Christ is even such an one as themselves—have often said that outside their own narrow pale there is no salvation. All except themselves are grimly handed over to “unconvenanted mercies.” The Emperor Constantine rebuked such narrowness when he told the Novatian Acesius to get a ladder and make a way to heaven by himself. But as Jerome told the Luciferians, “the Son of God had not come down only for skin-clad Sardinians;” and as Bishop Sanderson told the Puritans, the Church was not confined to the narrow pingle of a room in Amsterdam. Christ is none so poor now as to have a Church only in the Anglican cathedral, or only in the Baptist tabernacle. Romanists have burned Puritans, and Puritans have persecuted Romanists, and Episcopalians have denied the name of Church to Presbyterians, and other sects have combined to excommunicate Quakers; and high compassionate Heaven, wearied by the wrangling “subdichotomies of petty schisms,” has smiled in pity at the inflated ignorance of men. But “in

my Father's house are many mansions." Heaven is larger than the divisions of jealous disciples, who mutually call down fire on each other. "The meek, the just, the pious, the devout are all of one religion;" and erring men shall recognize each other, with tears of penitence and shame, in heaven when they find that they in their hatred and their arrogance have made sad the hearts which God hath not made sad, and thought that they were doing God service when they slew or persecuted some of the truest of His sons.

iii. The imitation of Christ is feasible then, firstly, in all conditions of life; and feasible, secondly, amid all differences of opinion; and thirdly, it can assume manifold forms. His example is too rich in its many-sidedness, too multitudinous in its separate elements of beauty, to place it within the reach of any man to achieve the sum, or complete the circle, of His infinite perfections. Saints have differed widely from each other in their manifestations of goodness, and in their lines of action. Even angels have a beautiful diversity. The Seraphim of knowledge differ from the Cherubim of love; nor is Raphael the affable Archangel an exact counterpart of the herald Gabriel, or the warrior Michael. We must imitate Christ in the way open and possible to each of us, and according to the

measure of our faith. If we cannot soar as eagles, we must flutter as sparrows. In Christ's body, which is the universal Church, there is the hand and the foot, as well as the eye and the ear. The martyrs died for Him; the hermits left the world for Him; the Crusaders fought for Him; the students toiled for Him; the preachers preached for Him; for Him the missionaries went into heathen lands; for Him kings ruled and princes decreed justice; for His sake merchants have been generous and honest; for His sake youths have subdued their passions; for His sake young women have loved the truth better than their own fancies; for His sake men have been loving and content. Are all martyrs? are all hermits? are all students? are all missionaries? No; the one body has many members, and all members have not the same office. There are many gems, and one is green as the emerald, and one is red as the ruby, and one is purple as the amethyst; there are many saints, and each of them flashes back his one ray of the same divine and perfect light. We cannot paint soft, holy, pathetic pictures like Fra Angelico; we cannot clothe ourselves, like John Knox and Savonarola, as with the thunders of Sinai; we cannot, like Handel, thrill the soul with heart-shaking music; we cannot sing like Dante or Milton; or discover the laws of science, like Newton or Faraday;

or purify corrupted Churches, like Luther and Wesley. Well, but can we not control our evil tempers? can we not curb our bitter tongues? can we not mortify our corrupt desires? can we not try day by day to be useful to some one? can we not rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep? can we not try to make the world a little less sinful, and a little less wretched? can we not at least give to the poorest of Christ's little ones a cup of cold water in Christ's name? And thus to live is to abide in Christ, for it is to walk as He walked.

iv. For, lastly—which makes this second test of St. John only another aspect of the first—the truest, best imitation of Christ is not by aiming to do great things, but by the practice of simple goodness. When Mr. Venn told his children that he was going to take them to see the happiest man he knew, he did not take them to palaces or rulers, but led them to the poverty-stricken couch, on which, in suffering patience, lay a young man in the last stage of consumption. So if I were asked to name the best man I ever knew, the last place in which I should dream of looking for him would be among the belauded sagemen of party factions; I should not even take into account whether he belonged to this or that sect, or to this or that church; I should not dream of inquiring whether he adopted this posture, or made that genuflection.

or pronounced the party-word *shibboleth* or *sibboleth*, or did not so much as pronounce it at all; but I should ask this only, Has he a heart of sympathy, or only one corroded with small envies, and monopolized by petty interests, and sour and cold, and ruffled with small offences—

As the sharp win' that ruffles all day long,
A little bitter pool about a stone
On the bare cors ?

Is he a man who will put himself out for the sake of others ? Is he humble or domineering ? Is he straightforward or subterranean ? Is he generous or niggardly ? Is he unselfish, or is he an egotist who can never get outside the petty circle of himself ? Can you trust his word, or must you discount it, feeling sure that to your enemy he will say something quite different ? Is he honest, or will he stoop to professional tricks and trade conventionalities ? In one word, does he keep the commandments ? Does he walk as Christ walked ? If he does not, of what value is his vaunted orthodoxy or vaunted religion ? If he does, be he a Quaker like William Penn, or a Romanist like Vincent de Paul, or a Pagan like Marcus Aurelius, let us grapple him to our souls with hooks of steel. If he is all this—humble, generous, kind, trustworthy, fair, loving—then, aristocrat or democrat, Puritan or Ritualist—what matters it ?—that

man is keeping God's commandments, that man is walking as Christ walked Churches may rail at him, but the souls of the righteous are in the hands of the Lord Christ shall say to him, "Well done, good and faithful servant," and shall own him before all the holy angels His hope shall be full of immortality Having been a little chastised he shall be greatly rewarded, for God has proved him and found him worthy for Himself So that those who afflicted him here shall say, We fools accounted his life madness, and his end to be without honour How is he numbered among the children of God, and his lot is among the saints!'

Love the true Imitatio Christi.

"He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him. But he that hateth his brother is in the darkness." —1 JOHN II. 10, 11



WE must now deal further with the subject of the second test—the imitation of Christ as a proof of our union with Him. We only saw four things about it—first, that it is possible to imitate Christ in every rank and condition of life; secondly, that we may be like Him amid all differences of Church, or sect, or party; thirdly, that imitation of Him may be very diverse in its forms and manifestations; lastly, but most important, that it consists mainly in simple goodness. Simple goodness—plain obedience: take it once more home to yourselves, whether you like the test or not. It is not my test, it is St. John's; it is not even St. John's, it is Christ's. Christ does not require of us, and never in any age has required of all, transcendental theories, superfine moralities, heroic self-

martyrdoms. All that He requires of us, first, and at present, is to be plainly, simply, ordinarily good. With minutiae, and ceremonies, and ecclesiastical accuracies we may deceive ourselves; they will not deceive Him, nor will they be more in His sight than the small dust of the balance. You will not find in all His teaching one word of praise for them; but you will find in all His teaching and throughout all Scripture, from Genesis to Revelation, the one plain broad truth. "He that doeth righteousness is righteous."

2 Well, many of you may be tempted to say, "Thank God, I am a religious person; I practise righteousness, I am not an extortioner, unjust, an adulterer, or as the rest of men are." Be it so: and yet you may have broken every one of the commandments, and your whole life may be their habitual violation. Christ showed us that, when He said that the Ten Commandments were but two—love God, love thy neighbour. St John illustrates His teaching when he tells us that to walk as Christ walked is to keep Christ's new and old commandment—"love one another:" old, in that it was delivered at the very beginning of the Gospel; new, and ever new, in its progress and its power. Love—an all-embracing charity—was the new light which Christ had introduced into human life. The moral darkness of the world consisted in the fact that

hatred, not love, had been the principle of life. The envious exclamation of the Pagans proves how much they were amazed by Christian charity, seeing that among themselves they were "hateful and hating one another." Already the new glory of unselfishness had begun to shine. Christ had risen in thousands of holy hearts. And, as century after century passed by, that principle of love saved the gladiator from the arena, emancipated the slave; mitigated the doom of the captive; reared the hospital; tended the leper; rescued the fallen; elevated the destiny of trampled womanhood; made marriage a sacrament, kindled the holy light of Christian homes; flung, with a millstone round his neck, into the sea, the offender against the innocence of the child. Love was the one best evidence of Christianity; and love is the one truest sign of individual sincerity. And therefore he that saith he is in the light, he that calls himself a Christian, and hateth his brother, is in darkness even until now. He that loveth his brother abideth in the light; he will neither stumble himself nor will he cause others to do so.

3. But you will say, "I do not hate my brother." By "brother," St. John means your brother-man; above all, your brother-Christian. And "hatred" may take many forms, and in "hatred" Christ includes mere passive selfish-

ness. Look at the matter more closely, and see whether you may not be guilty actively of hating your brethren in some form or other, or, at any rate passively of not loving them.

There are in the New Testament two words which express different kinds of love. One is *φιλῆν*, *amān*, the love of natural affection, one is *ἀγαπᾶν*, *diligere*, the love of honour and esteem. And therefore there are two feelings which the New Testament brands as active hatred. The opposite to natural affection is burning animosity the opposite of loving esteem is fierce contempt. He who indulges in either of these forms of hatred is not walking as Christ walked, is not a Christian, is abiding in darkness, not in the light of God. And yet how common are both these forms of hatred!

1. The spirit of hatred in the form of contempt, depreciation, disbelief in human nature, misanthropy, cynicism, is very common. There are men who will see no possibility of merit in human nature. If they hear of a noble deed they will at once invent a low motive for it. They sneer at the notion of disinterested tenderness or self-sacrifice. Their view of human nature is that of La Rochefoucauld. The worst men indemnify themselves for their own villainy by seeing no virtue in others. Lepers themselves, they peer about for the spot of leprosy.

on every other brow. Like Nero or Heliogabalus in their total pollution, they have the unalterable conviction that not a single man is pure. They always fix all doubt upon the darker side. Men and women who are of the world worldly, and whose sphere, therefore is the sphere of moral darkness, are never so happy as when they are tearing open the bleeding wounds of society ; when they are dragging into the light of day the adulteress, who is yet less degraded than themselves ; when they are stimulating the appetite of malice with slanderous inventions ; and tricking out, for the delectation of the base, every loathly plume from that foul bird of rapine whose prey is man's good name. Man delights them not, no, nor women neither, except those who are like themselves ;

While some, whose souls the old serpent long had drawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded :—women they,
Women, or what had been those graceful things.

This form of hatred, as poisonous as it is contemptible, is in all days as rank as the hemlock. And if any who indulge therein—if any who thus make life meaner and more wretched—say that they are in the light, they lie ; St. John tells them that they have no part or lot in Christ, or in anything but darkness.

Christ loved and esteemed our nature fallen,

though it was, so much that He took it into His Godhead and died for it. He came to heal those who are broken in heart, and to find a medicine to heal their sickness. But natures full of malice are never happy save when they are flinging in the face of men and women the torturing vitriol of their cynicism and their abuse. The law of Christ's life was love ; the law of theirs is hate.

ii. And besides this hatred of cynicism and slander, there is the hatred of fury and vengeance. There are men who seem as though they wished to avenge themselves upon all mankind. The dishonest speculator, in a work of fiction, seeing that he is no longer trusted in the haunts of business, feels as if he would like to turn a river of strychnine into the Stock Exchange, and poison men wholesale. But more often the brother whom men hate is some fancied enemy of their own. In some way—perhaps with perfect innocence—he has offended them, or opposed their opinions : therefore they are poisoned and jaundiced against him ; undermine and misrepresent him ; depreciate for years together all he says and all he does. The heart of a man who has admitted such a hatred into his life is hell. It is full of stinging and hissing snakes, which he himself has bred, and which writhe amid his heart's blood. This absorbing fury has been the cause of some of

the deadliest crimes which the world has ever seen. Again and again it has ruined kingdoms and laid cities flat. And a man who has once suffered any form of hatred to absorb him is like the hideous figure which Giotto, perhaps inspired by Dante, has painted, of a man with large ears, set wide to the wind, with hands hooked to rend and tear, and with a deadly envenomed serpent coming out of his mouth, which bends and twists itself back to dart its flickering tongue into his forehead. And when St. John says that such a man "is in darkness, and knoweth not whither he goeth, because the darkness has blinded his eyes," he was thinking perhaps of what the soul of Judas had become, when, as all the winds, on some night of storm, riot and howl through the rent walls of some desecrated shrine, so, through his ruined soul, envy and hate and avarice rushed in bewildering chaos, and he went out, as the beloved disciple adds with a shudder of dread significance "he went out, *and it was night*

4 But a man may have no cynicism, no fury, no vengeance in his heart, and yet be a passive egoist, infinitely far from loving his brother. Egoism is the underground root of active hatred. And is that not common?

How many thousands are there, both rich and poor, who, in their selfishness and fleshliness, do not even know what is meant by love of the

brethren! They reckon nothing of the world's misery! Many of the rich are generous; many of the poor are tender, self-sacrificing, compassionate. But are there not more of the rich who spend a thousand pounds on their own luxuries and extravagances for every one they give to any good cause? and more of the poor who squander in drink the money which should go to clothe their ragged wives and feed their starving children? No rank of life, no class of men, has the monopoly of guilty selfishness. Every form of society abounds in men whose heart is as fat as brawn and their conscience hard as the nether millstone. They are found alike among the gilded youth and the loafers of the ginshop; alike in grand clubs, and at the thievish corners of the streets. In whatever rank, they are evils of society, cumberers of the ground, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God. Like the Epicureans of old they make the culture of personal gratification, and the avoidance of personal pain, the direct and immediate end of life. Let me refer you to three such pictures drawn from life, one of a man coarsely and actively evil; the other of a man evil principally from indolent self-indulgent egotism, the third of a woman loveless from mere selfish want of thought.

- i. The man of vice is a hater of his brethren. "He was one of those men," so we read in a photo-

graph of fiction, "who through their long, useless, ill-flavoured lives, always contrive to live well, to eat and drink of the best, to lie softly; to indulge every passion, though the cost to others might be ruin for life, to know no gods but his own bodily senses, and no duty but that which he owed to those gods, to eat all and produce nothing, to love no one but himself, to care not at all for his country, or even for his profession; to have no creed, no friend, no conscience; to be troubled with nothing that could touch his heart—such was this man's life. There are many such about in the world, known well to be so at clubs, in drawing-rooms. Men give them dinners, and women smile upon them. They never lack cigars or champagne; they have horses to ride and servants to wait upon them. Upon the whole they are popular.'—There is the first picture—the picture of a man walking in the darkness of vice because he loveth not his brother.

ii. But you are not thus viciously worldly? Alas! the mere egotism of selfishness may also be on the sloping edge of crime. Take the character of Tito Melema, in the great tale of "*Romola*." In him you see, step by step, the deterioration of a bright and gifted nature simply through the easy ignoble selfishness which—because it has no love, and will face no sacrifice—has to be taught by utter shipwreck. "I ought" and "I ought"

not are gradually banished from the vocabulary of such an one. Beginning only with the desire to 'extract from the world the utmost sum of pleasure to make life easy to himself to enjoy' his human lot if possible in such a way that it shall pinch him nowhere. And swayed solely by these considerations at every critical turn of life he makes self-indulgence not duty, the law of his being and he becomes a traitor, an adulterer, a murderer and ends by the natural process of retribution as many such a man has ended in the lowest depths of social and moral ruin.

iii. But perhaps you will again say I am not thus heartless, thus dead to conscience. Well, there is a third class not openly guilty like these wretches, who yet in called selfishness with eyes blind to their misery and them with ears deaf to the universal moan contentedly spend their whole lives in the languid round of varied surfeit and luxury. My picture of these may be taken from that famous poem which describes such a selfish isolation.

Many a lady pleases her
 When it is free to dwell
 In such a state of ease and ease,
 Dear soul for all is well
 O Godlike fortune which art mine,
 I can but count the price gain

* When time I watch the drunken **ag** droves of wine
 That range on order plain,

In filthy sloughs they roll a prurient skin,
 They graze and wallow, breed and sleep,
 And oft some brainless devil enters in
 And drives them to the deep.

And so surrounded by art and splendour, but careless of sorrow and scornful of the poor, she lived till the punishment of God fell upon her. The other phases might need modern illustration—this needs none. It is the case of Nabal. It is the case of the Rich Fool, on whose callous selfishness crashed the doom, "Thou fool, this night!" It is the case of Dives. It is the case of many a niggardly and greedy millionaire.

Has it never occurred to us that Dives was not, so far as we are told, an oppressor or a criminal, but only that he lived in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day, and that poor neglected Lazarus lay at his gate full of sores? Well, the awful moral of that parable is that a man guilty of no overt wrong, be he rich or be he poor—for Dives may be in rags as well as in purple—may yet be reckoned among the haters of his brethren. Oh, will Christ deem that a man has discharged his duty to the vast world of sin and sorrow for which He died, when he has given up the price of a pot or two of beer for a comrade, or dribbled out, here or there, to this or that society some minimum fraction of his uncounted superfluity? Are men content thus to live for things corruptible, for

things that perish in the using? Is there no warning for them in the stern words of St James the Lord's brother, Go to now ye rich men — ye and all ye brutally selfish men whether rich or poor— weep and howl for your calamities? Will they not dread evermore the calm awfulness of their Saviour's sentence. Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these my brethren, ye did it not unto me?

Well then hatred as you see, takes many form and even passive greed and selfishness is only hatred shunning dead. But even yet your conscience may be untouched. You will say, I am no Colonel Maublie no Tito Melema, no savage drunkard or vicious voluptuary. I am not worldly but religious. I fast twice in the week and so on. But religion alas! has its own dangers. I say with a living preacher—

From all the paralyzing cant of an unfelt devotion from all the hypocrisy of an uplifted voice and a down hanging arm from all the mimicry of an external ritual and a selfish daily life good Lord, deliver us! Would to God that religion, so called, had in the least exorcised the spirit of hatred! On the contrary, religion—or the thing that calls itself such—sometimes takes into its house, empty, swept, and beautifully garnished a devil seven times more wicked. One reason we are told which made the Emperor Julian an apostate was the inter-

necine fury of rival theologians who professed a form of godliness but denied its power

Omnia theologia has passed into a proverb and a byword and saintliness and service never have been in any way the least protection from its ruin. But even when nominally used in the service of religion envy and hatred are sheer Antichrist and where they are, Christ is not. I tell you my brethren beware of all factious religionism. It hated only differs from other hatred in being less excusable and directed more exclusively against its brethren. They who indulge in it begin as Coleridge truly said by loving their party better than their Church—go on to love their Church better than their God—and end by loving themselves best of all.

5 Here then once more we are led by many ways to one and the same conclusion. It is that the essence of acceptable worship—the essence of true religion—the essence of all saving obedience—the essence of the imitation of Christ—the one central test of all knowledge of God of all fellowship with God of all life in Christ—is love—love not shown in soft professions and false amenities but in large hearted **comprehensiveness**, in real active sympathy in universal **self-sacrificing** loving-kindness. Religion is love, as God is love. Though you speak with the tongue of men and of angels, though you dole

away all your goods, instead of your odd six-pences, to feed the poor; though you are kneeling in church all day long; though you give your body to be burned, and have not love, you are no better than booming brass and clanging cymbal. No fuss or chatter about religious things will avail you so much as to the turning of the scale of your destiny by a single hair, without plain, simple goodness. And without love there is no goodness. Anything which pretends to be goodness, and yet is hard, cruel, slanderous, unsympathetic, unkind, is not goodness at all, but either blank hypocrisy or ruinous self-deceit. Absolute selfishness is simply Satan. "Poor wretch," said St. Theresa of Satan—"poor wretch, he cannot love." Admit the blind worm of callous egotism or the viper of bitter hatred into the Paradise of your soul, even by holding ajar the wicket gate of your religion, and your Eden will become a hell. Apply these truths. Have you a bitter prejudice, or a fretting dislike against your brother? Trample that adder into its proper mud! Have you one whom you hate? Leave there thy gift before the altar, first go and be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift. If our consciences—not condemning us for any active hatred—yet do not condemn us for passive selfishness, for self-indulgent, self-worshipping egotism, for the

slack hand, the cold heart, the sluggish sympathy, the callous sensibility, the niggard gift, and for selfish, supine, immoral acquiescence in all the woes and wickedness for which each one of us (the laity every whit as much as the clergy) is in his measure responsible, then, beginning even now, let us inaugurate a new day with larger loving-kindness. What reward shall we have? Love is its own reward; it is a foretaste of heaven; he who has the spirit of it needs nothing more on earth. It will be enough for us that we shall not stumble because we are in the light (John xi. 9, 10; Prov. iv. 19). For, as St. John tells us, it is the test of our profession; the test of our sincerity; the test of our union with God. It is to be in the light, and to walk in the light. It is to walk as Christ walked; it is to know Him, to be in Him, and to abide in Him for evermore.

XI.

Love not the World.

“Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world” — 1 JOHN II. 15

ON the first day, as well as the first Sunday of a new year, it might seem natural to address you on some subject, directly bearing on the flight of time, and the course of our brief earthly lives. And, indeed, I cannot but begin by wishing, from my heart, a happy new year to all of this parish and this congregation. But I know of no counsel so likely to conduce to that happiness as this great and solemn command involved in this great and solemn prohibition. Nor do I know any lesson more suitable to the commemoration of our Lord's circumcision; for the inmost significance of that event is, as our Collect tells us, that our hearts and all our members being mortified from all worldly and carnal lusts, we may ever obey God's blessed will. If I knew of any earthly means of securing happiness I would

tell you of it. But there is not. The sole path of the Christian is the path of the Cross, the path of self-denial. And that path of blessedness here, which leads to infinite happiness hereafter has ever been lonely, narrow, and uphillward. The river of God's pleasures flows only from the throne of the Eternal, and flows only by the rocky steep of holiness. There is no need, therefore to pause in my endeavour to show you what the Gospel means as St John explains it. At this point he himself will furnish us with a new year's lesson, as deeply needed as any that we could find.

Step by step already, he has set forth to us the blessings which the Gospel offers, the means of those blessings, the searching tests of obedience to God, and imitation of Christ, by which we may tell whether we have attained to them. And then after a solemn appeal to his readers he lays on them his deep injunction,

Love not the world. If indeed, we be Christians a great 'love not' must be the inevitable complement of the new and old commandment of love.

I let us try to grasp St John's meaning. "Love not the world." The Greek, as I told you, two words for love, *phileo* (φιλέω), the word for natural affection, and *agapan* (ἀγαπᾷ), the love of high regard. The word here used is *ἀγαπᾷ*. St John bids us not to esteem the world; to

sit loosely to it and all its interests ; to be in it, but not of it ; to face, and not to fear, its hatred ; not to have our treasure there, but to set our affections on things above.

There are also two words for world, *kosmos* (κόσμος) and *aiōn* (αἰών). *Kosmos* represents the material universe, the existing order of things ; *aiōn*, or "age," represents the dominant form of human life, the world mirrored in the subjectivity of man. The word here used is *kosmos*. St. John would tell us, as another has done, that "this time-world flickers on the great still mirror of eternity, and man's little life has duties which alone are great." Now in one sense we *may* love the *kosmos*. We may love the dread magnificence of the unintelligent creation as a work and as a book of God. We may climb by these sunbeams to the Father of Lights.

His are the mountains, and the valleys His,
And the resplendent rivers.

Every bird may sing of Him, and every common bush be aflame with Him. And we may love the *aiōn* too, the world of man ; for God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son to die for it. The love of nature and the love of man only become fatal when they take the place of God, when they make us forget God. He who makes man and man's opinions, and man's praise or censure, and man's love or

hatred, the guide and measure of his actions, will sink to the level of man's ruin. And innocent as may seem the love of nature, yet when

Earth fills her lap with pleasures of her own,

she does much

To make her foster-child, her inmate man,
Forget the glories he hath known,
And that imperial palace whence he came.

2. The meaning, then, of St. John's warning is that we are not to love the world, in any aspect of it, apart from God; which would be, as St. Augustine says, as if some maiden should love the ring or the jewel which her lover gave her, and care nothing for him who gave them. The exclusive love of the world—the godless absorbing love of the world, the false sensual love of the world—is death and shipwreck. It is indeed mere selfishness. The man sees his own reflection, hears his own echo in the universe, and pursues that, and is enamoured of that. “He regards himself as the centre of this world, or of some little world which he has made for himself out of it; and all the disorders and miseries of life have come from the multiplication of all these miserable little centres of vanity and self-satisfaction, and from their clashing against each other;” and from the discontents and struggles of those who dwell in them. When St. John bids us love God, and not love

the world, what he desires is to shift the centre of gravity of our whole being from self to God. For alas! God too often becomes small to us, as the world tends to become too great.

3 But to prevent the perversion of what he says into any false and fanatical inferences, St. John goes on to define what he means by the world—namely, all vain and vile hopes, all mean and selfish desires, all sensual and godless modes of life. He does not give a moment's sanction to the Manichean blasphemy that the body, and that all matter, are intrinsically evil; or to the Calvinist extravagance that man is totally and absolutely corrupt; or to the monkish selfishness of blank religious individualism. He does not bid us fly from the world, or wrap ourselves up in self-righteous exclusiveness from it. But he does bid us not to set the creature above the Creator, not to esteem earth more than heaven, or this life more than the Eternal. And he mentions three typical false tendencies of worldliness, whereby we may test whether we love the world or no—"the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life."

4. It would take far too long in one sermon to enter fully into the meaning of these phrases. But generally they are all things which we desire to appropriate, to enjoy, or to pride ourselves upon, exclusively and personally. They are sensualism, self-indulgence, self-conceit.

They are the unlawful gratifications of bodily appetites, of mental self-satisfaction, of egotistic arrogance. They are false views of pleasure; false views of possession, false views of superiority. They are, in short wrongful indulgence of the senses, wrongful bent of the purpose; wrongful self-glorification in the gifts of life.

i. By the lusts of the flesh, we mean every sinful indulgence of the appetites of the lower nature; gluttony, intemperance, uncleanness. The man who so loves the world is dead while he lives, he degrades himself to the animal, instead of rising to the Divine. Immeasurable by any human arithmetic are the diseases, the miseries, the degradations which have come upon man like a flood by the guilty subservience to sensual passions. Gluttony, with its foul train of avenging maladies, debasing life into a feeding-trough for swine; drink, with its loathly horrors and abominations, turning earth into a hell of fiends; impurity, with its eating canker and smouldering bale fires, depraving the body by the infectious influence of the vice-polluted soul:—ah! love not the world, neither the things that are in the world! Every law of nature, every generation of ruined souls, all the foul, bitter, accumulated experience of mankind, will tell you that “unlawful pleasure is delusive and envenomed pleasure; its hollowness bitterly disappoints at the time; its poison cruelly tor-

tures afterwards, its effects deprave for ever" Even Paganism, amid her passions of dishonour, given over to her own reprobate mind confessed the misery and the shame of her own pollution Her Sirens sang upon naked island shores, strewn with the bleaching bones of men Her Harpies the gust of vexation fictitious lawless passion, spirits of wasted energy and wandering desire, of unappeased famine and sickening hope — made horrible the lighted banquet with the flapping of their obscene wings The serpent hiss and shaken torch and iron scourge of her Luries were the whips and stings of a torturing memory Her Cuccu was a cruel and horrible enchained mistress who degraded men into beasts

Who know not Cuccu,
The luster of the Sin? who charm their
Wh ever to all the upright shape
And down will fall into a grove of swine

These emblems of baleful fascination and avenging consequence are the world's own confession of the curse which is in the lusts of the flesh

ii And the lust of the eyes—what is it? It is covetousness, which is idolatry it is immoral contentment with things comfortable, it is fastidious indifference and slothful aestheticism. Are not many men absorbed in the greed of possession, in the desire to deck themselves out in the dress and tinsel of earth, in the passion

to daub themselves with the thick clay of wealth and ease? Forgetful of God, do they not live in Epicurean callousness to the want and misery around us, or in the frivolous round of pleasureless dissipations, and "the quotidian ague of frigid impertinences"? It takes a hundred different forms, this lust of the eyes—from the display of the *nouveaux riches* to the selfishness of the Palace of Art; from the fraud of the greedy speculator to the Zolaism of the novel and the nudity of Art; from the languid frivolity of the drawing-room to the inhuman deadness of the counting-house. It is the spirit of desire engendered in the eyes by the sight of all things which, apart from God and our duty to God and man, attract the imagination or fascinate the sense.

iii. And the pride of life:—the scornful and unusual Greek word, *alazonia* (ἀλαζονεία), might almost be rendered the "humbug" or braggadocio of life, not of the loftier region of human life, but of the purely animal life, the outside of life. The word implies all false views of our gifts, our possessions, or our personality. It is the spirit of puff and push; of brag and bounce; of strut and swagger; of inflation and pomposity; of fastidious contempt and domineering cynicism. It is the jingling purse of Sir Gorgius Midas, and the acrid sneer of Mr. Snarl. It is the hectoring gasconade of the bully, and the unscrupulous brutality of the

controversialist. Do you not see it?—why, it is on every side. We see it in the very gait of men; we hear it in their tones of voice; we read it between the lines of many a false and envious disparagement. It disguises itself and takes its place even in religion as an Angel of Light. It is the Protean spirit of self-satisfaction and envious rivalry. In the world it looks down on its betters from the whole height of its inferiority; in the Church, when its members sink into spiritual pride, the spirit of the accuser of his brethren is puffed up because his leprosy is white as innocence itself.

5. "Love not the world." Oh, what ruin the love of the world has wrought! It began with causing the loss of Eden. It was the lust of the eyes when Eve saw that the tree was pleasant to look at, and good for food, and a tree to be desired to make her wise. It was the lust of the flesh, when

Greedily she engorged without restraint
And knew not eating death.

It was the pride of life when, in the false blithe flush of her shame, she thought that she was as a god, knowing good and evil. Satan used this triple enginery, so fatal to man, against our Lord. He tempted Him to the lust of the flesh when he bade Him by unlawful means to sate His hunger; to the lust of the eyes, when he

showed Him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them ; to the pride of life, when he bade Him assert His personality, and challenge a miracle. Adam fell and ruined all our race ; but,

Oh, loving wisdom of our God !
When all was sin and shame,
A nobler Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

Christ, to redeem our race, trampled on selfish appetite, spurned the allurements of earthly ambition, refused the self-adoration of spiritual presumption.

He said, and stood,
But Satan, smitten by amazement, fell.

6. Now these are the three temptations which, in one or other of their manifold forms, assail us all ; and St. John gives three of the awful reasons why we should not yield to them.

i. First, because of their source. It is a source narrow and impure. They are not from the Father, but from the world. Now "it is the law of equilibrium that nothing can rise higher than its source." If the springs of our action flow from such molehill altitudes, our life will but dribble through meanness like some wretched gutter of the street, instead of leaping upwards like some pure, strong fountain whose source is in the eternal hills. "Ye," said our Lord to

the priests^s and Pharisees—"ye are from your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do."

ii. And, next, he warned us not to love the world, because if any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. A vessel which is filled with poison or with mud, cannot be filled with lustial water. Contraries cannot co-exist together. The love of the world and the love of the Father are mutually exclusive, there is no room for both in the same soul. Where the light is there can be no darkness, where the darkness is there can be no light. Whosoever "would be a friend of the world maketh himself an enemy of God." "No man," said our Lord, "can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

iii. And, thirdly, St. John says, "the world is passing away, and the lust thereof." How brief and fleeting, how hollow and empty, on its own repeated confession yea, what a pleonasm of emptiness, what a thrice doubled vanity of vanities is all that earth can give. All ages have felt this, and all ages expressed it. It is Jacob, so intriguing and so prosperous, and yet saying, "Few and evil have been the days of the years of my pilgrimage." It is Job and Jeremiah cursing the day on which they were born. It is

Isaiah: "And a voice said, Cry; and I said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass, and the glory of man as a flower of the field." It is St. James: "What is your life? it is even a vapour that passeth away." It is Sophocles: "Man is the shadow of a dream." It is Omar Khayyam:

The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
Turns ashes; or it prospers, and, anon,
Like snow upon the desert's dusty face,
Lightening a little hour or two, is gone.

Does not this day remind us, "Thou bringest our years to an end, like a tale that is told"? And shall our souls, *can* our souls be satisfied with this flying foam-wreath; this glimmer of sunlight on an icicle; this shadow of an insect's wing; this ever-returning wheel of appetite; this "pitiful coiling and uncoiling and self-involved return" of vain or vile desire—this rag perhaps of a might-have-been which we can never wear? Is it, can it be enough even for the shallowest and vulgarest appetite—

This life of nothings, nothing worth
From that first nothing ere our birth;
To that last nothing under earth?

Oh, heavens, can we sell the eternal jewel of our souls for these nothings?

Iv. St. John might have added a fourth reason—namely, the *curse* of these evil pleasures; the retributions of these wrongful desires; the

axe of heaven which is ever laid at the root of this idle arrogance. He might have told us that the world's pleasure is like to the seawater which drives into madness the thirsty who drink of it. This he passes by. Enough for every noble soul that "the world passeth away and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever."

Love not the world, but love God. From the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life He calls us to the three great Christian virtues of purity, charity, and humbleness. Oh! my friends, in these, or nowhere, will you find the path of happiness for the new year. In purity: "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." In charity: "Love is the fulfilling of the law." In humility: "Learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest unto your souls." Oh, Lord Jesus Christ, send us these, Thy white-winged angels to guide and bless us, to take us by the hand and walk with us in the coming year. Send us Thine angel of purity, with the lily in her hand, to lead us to Thy light. Send us Thine angel of love, to thaw with her glowing flame the icebergs of mammon-worshipping selfishness which freeze our selfish hearts. Send us Thine angel of humility with that wreath to lay upon the tomb of our earthly desires, that wreath of violets which none can gather,

save where they grow, beneath Thy cross. Oh ! as we kneel before Thy table, give to each one of us that love of the Father which absorbs and annihilates the love of the world ; that we, loving Thee above all things, may obtain Thy gracious promises which exceed all that we can desire, which are above all that we can ask or think. Thus do Thou grant unto us all, Thy children, a happy new year, so that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we may walk soberly, righteously, and godly in this present world !

From Thee departing we are lost, and rove
At random, without honour, hope, or peace.
From Thee is all that soothes the life of man,
His high endeavour, and his glad success,
His strength to suffer, and His will to serve.
But oh ! Thou bounteous Giver of all good,
Thou art of all Thy gifts Thyself the crown ;
Give what Thou canst, without Thee we are poor,
And with Thee rich, take all the world beside.

XII.

Antichrist : or, False Forms of Religion.

" Little children, it is the last hour ; and as ye heard that anti-christ cometh, even now have there arisen many antichrists."—
1 JOHN ii. 18.

TRUST that by this time you will have seen the systematic, and almost-symmetrical, structure of an Epistle which used to be carelessly regarded, even by scholars like St. Augustine and Calvin, as a loose congeries of maxims chiefly about charity. You will have seen that St. John first offers us immortal promises ; then shows us the elements of, and need for, those promises in the nature of God, the nature of man, and the nature of sin ; then points us to the Divine remedies for sin in Christ's propitiation and Christ's atonement ; furnishes us next with two infallible tests of our own share in the fruition of those promises, the test of obedience to God, and imitation of Christ ; and, lastly, closes this section of his Epistle by adding a "love not" to the command of "love," by telling us

the things which, if we be true Christians, we must reject and avoid. Those two things are, in general, worldliness, and false religion; on the one hand, worldliness—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; on the other, Antichrist—another Jesus who is not the Christ, and a different teaching which is not the Gospel.

1. It is the latter thing to be avoided with which we have now to deal. Of worldliness, in its three typical tendencies of sensualism, selfishness, and arrogance, we have spoken. The second enemy against which St. John warns us is more plausible, more insidious. It is the corruption of religion itself. St. John devotes this whole section of the Epistle to dealing with it, and by St. John alone in Scripture it is called “Antichrist.”

2. Now, nothing would be easier than to give you a learned disquisition about various forms of Antichrist as touched upon by Daniel and St. Paul, and in the Apocalypse and here. Possibly I might interest you in this; but I do not see what good it would do you, or how such speculations, and conjectures, and minute exposition would send any one of you home really better or more earnestly spiritual. I would fain be “pure from the blood of all men.” It is my most earnest desire, now and always, to be practically useful—to touch

your hearts, to awaken your consciences, to elevate your lives, so that none who hear should be able, with any truth, to say before God, "I heard nothing that was useful to my soul." I shall not therefore touch on the secondary question of exegesis in which this section abounds—a duty which I have striven to discharge in other books—but shall try with you to grasp the central principle. Suffice it for our present purpose that St. John is not speaking of any personal Antichrist, like the Antiochus Epiphanes of Daniel, or the Nero of the Apocalypse, or the man of sin of St. Paul; but of apostasy from the true Gospel, "marked by divisions, errors, temptations, within the Christian body itself." The word Antichrist sometimes means an adversary of Christ, but it has another meaning here. Just as *antibasileus* means a viceregent, and *anthypatos* a proconsul, so Antichrist here means one who takes the place of Christ, one who opposes Christ only by usurping His functions, and assuming His guise. The immediate Antichrist of which St. John was thinking was the heresy of the Gnostics, who, calling themselves Christians, and even superfine Christians, misrepresented what Christ was and what He taught. Observe that Satan has two wholly different ways of ruining men: he assaults and he deceives. He bounds on them like a roaring lion, or he creeps and glitters up to them with

the seductive fascination of a serpent. He overthrows their morals, or he poisons their religion. He binds the lost in the fetters of sensual worldliness ; he beguiles, if it were possible, the very elect, by transforming himself into an Angel of Light. And this is his masterpiece of subtlety and temptation. For religion is the light of life, and if he can turn even the light which is in us into darkness, how great is that darkness !

3. Let us not, then, be ignorant of his devices, for, if he can, he will frustrate even our form of godliness. He perverts men's beliefs ; he sophisticates their very consciences ; he destroys them by means of their best affections. He makes them do deadly evil, and take it for good. He is apt at quoting Scripture for his purpose, as he did thrice over to the Lord of glory. He pares up the Bible into little snippings of verbal theology—"old odd ends stolen forth of Holy Writ"—and on the strength of these misinterpreted fragments makes men believe that God is not a loving Father, but a terrific Moloch. Through the wicket gate of a perverted text he lets in a flood of errors, in which he then glories as inspired and infallible truth, and anathematizes as "heretics" the saints who reject his tyranny and his lies. Hence the Bible, which is so full of warnings against wicked conduct, is hardly less full of warnings against false piety. St. John's Anti-

christ, as, by studying this section of his Epistle, you may all see for yourselves, means that practical though not ostensible denial of the Father and the Son which is involved in false types of goodness, false types of orthodoxy, false types of religion, which all spring from false views of Christ.

4. Without pretending to exhaust this subject, I will touch practically on four types of Antichrist against which not only St. John, but all the Scriptures, warn us, as did our Saviour Christ; and, since nothing less is at stake in this question than the reality of religion itself, may not I say, "Take heed how ye hear"?

i. The first type of false religion dealt with so sternly by St. Paul and in our Lord's repeated discourses, is Judaic and retrogressive religion; all that is involved in externalism, officialism, Pharisaism, when they are tempted *to identify the form with the reality, or substitute the shadow for the substance*. We must indeed be utterly ignorant of the first principles of Scripture if we have not seen how strongly it denounces this *reliance* on the outward. Why need I repeat, to any one who is not a tiro in knowledge, these eternal utterances on this subject of Samuel, of *Isaiah*, of Jeremiah, of Micah, of Hosea—of nearly all those great Hebrew prophets who were the avowed opponents of formalizing priestcraft, and

the earliest teachers of spiritual religion? The hollowness and emptiness of mere lip homage and eye service is one main theme of St. Paul; and the only words of burning indignation ever uttered by the lips of love were those in which Jesus scathed, and branded, and blighted with flash on flash of "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites," those who were the chief, and claimed to be the only, religious teachers of His day. No amount of outward religion, were it to sing psalms and perform ceremonies and attend services all day long, constitutes in itself so much as an approach to the godly life.

It were a vain endeavour
If I should gaze for ever
On that green light which lingers in the West;
I may not hope from outward forms to win
The passion and the life whose fountains are within.

If, as Scripture tells us, "the sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord," was a man like Louis XV., steeped to the lips in grossest sensualism—was he one whit less a wretch when, from the midst of every form of habitual vice, he got out of his carriage and knelt and genuflected in the mud before the passing sacrament? Woe to any Church which is content with the multiplication of functions, and takes it for progress! Will you listen to a voice from the fifteenth century?—the voice

of a martyr and a monk whom priests first slew and then built his tomb. "Our Church has outside many fine ceremonies in divine worship; fine vestments; an uncommon display of drapery and candlesticks; so many fine chalices, quite magnificent! Those great prelates, with their fine mitres on of gold and jewels, with their fine chasubles and copes, singing fine vespers, fine masses, so solemnly with so many fine ceremonies—that your head turns. That is how the modern Church is made. Men feed on these husks, and make themselves happy in these ceremonies, and say that the Church of Jesus Christ was never in a more flourishing condition, and that divine worship never was so well carried out. Do you take me? I mean that in the primitive Church the chalices were of wood and the prelates of gold; but now the chalices are gold and the prelates are wooden."

Who spoke these words? Savonarola, the Reformer of Florence, whom Rome burnt in 1498, and of whom Rome speaks now as a *vir vere apostolicus*. Or will you hear the description of a true Roman Catholic saint by a living Roman Catholic Cardinal? "St. Philip Neri," says Cardinal Newman, was characterized by "an earnest enforcement of interior religion; a jealousy of formal ceremonies; an insistence on obedience rather than sacrifice; on mental discipline rather than fasting or hair shirts; on

that illumination and freedom of the spirit which come of love." An idolatry of officialism, of externalism, of forms and ceremonies, is an Antichrist or false type of religion. The religion of Antichrist is a Christian Judaism, a yoke of bondage; Christ's service is perfect freedom. Stand fast, then, in the liberty wherewith Christ has made you free.

ii. Another Antichrist—another false type of religious error, disguising itself as an Angel of Light—is emotionalism. Ever since the fourth and fifth centuries, when there began to gather to a head in the Church that imposthume of corruptions which some ignorantly confuse with Christianity, there has been a school of emotional devotees, represented by persons like the Convulsionaires and bleeding nuns, the hysterical dreamers and unnatural ascetics of Romanism, who have thought that religion consisted in such cheap and abject things as moaning all day, and kissing the five wounds of a crucifix—which they turn into a carved or painted idol hardly known to Christianity till the darkest depths of the dark ages. In defiance of the whole glad spirit of the New Testament, such barren and vapid emotionalism reduces life to a nightmare of useless agony spent in morbidly exaggerating the brief physical sufferings of our Lord upon the Cross. Such a life was lived, for instance, by Galeotto,

Malatesta, Prince of Rimini, in the fifteenth century. Impotently neglectful of all his duties, and "with his young virgin wife drooping by his side," this half-crazed fanatic shut himself up in a monastery, and lived as an ascetic, a useless, morbid, and mutilated life. He so macerated himself by senseless self-torture that the wounds on his body never ceased to bleed ; and at last the very Pope had to interfere, and, in the name of common sense and ordinary goodness, to remind him of the duties of his high position. All sense of pity for the world, all sense of duty to the world, had been swept away in him by an artificial pity for Christ—as though He needed pity—He, the Lord of Life, throned in glories inexpressible of unimaginable bliss for ever ! and as though He had made it man's religion to weep fruitlessly over that brief spasm of human pain which was but the birth-throe of an infinite beatitude ! I say that a religion of vague, fantastic, useless emotionalism is, in St. John's sense, Antichrist. It usurps the place of Christ. It neglects the teachings of Christ. It groans over a dead Christ while it neglects the work of the living Christ. It confuses a Christ after the flesh with the Christ after the Spirit. It miserably beweeeps a Bridegroom taken away, instead of manfully exulting in the Bridegroom who is with us for evermore. The spirit of the Gospel is not that of asceticism. Christ

was no ascetic: He came eating and drinking, the friend of publicans and sinners. As Christ gives freedom, and Antichrist bondage, so also Christ gives gladness, and Antichrist gives gloom.

iii. Again: Christ is the Lord of true godliness, but Antichrist of a feebling superstition. How do they differ? I will tell you in the words of a great teacher. "Superstition in all times, and among all nations, is the fear of a Spirit whose passions are those of a man, whose acts are the acts of a man: who is present in some places, not in others; who is kind to some persons, not to others; who is pleased or angry according to the degree of attention you pay to Him, or praise you refuse to Him; who is hostile generally to human pleasure, but may be bribed by sacrifice of a part of that pleasure into permitting the rest. This, whatever form of faith it colours, is the cause of superstition. And religion is the belief in a Spirit whose tender mercies are over all His works; who is kind even to the unthankful and the evil; to whom all creatures, times, and things are everlastingly holy; who claims not tithes of wealth, nor sevenths of days, but all the wealth that we have, and all the days that we live, and all the beings that we are—but claims them only because He delights in the delight of His creatures, and because, therefore,

the one duty that they owe, and the only service they can render to Him, is to be happy." The spirit of Christ is the spirit of religion; the spirit of Antichrist is the spirit of superstition.

iv. Again: orthodoxy of creed is not religion, though it has often been substituted for it. Even of orthodoxy Satan, in man's proud heart, may make heterodoxy and Antichrist. The mistake was often made in the fourth century. Even Athanasius calls the Arians by every conceivable name of contempt and disgust: yet a saintly Arian like Mark, Bishop of Arethusa, or Ulphila, the Apostle of the Goths, was far dearer to Christ than an unholy Catholic like Theophilus of Alexandria. There have been heretics in theory who yet in conduct have been God's dear saints. St. Justin Martyr said, "Those who live according to the Word are Christians, even though they were considered atheists, like Socrates." * And no word is used with more stupid malice than the word heresy by religious partisans. It is only man's pride and egotism which brand as "heretical" all opinions which are not his own. Heresies are weeds which will grow inevitably in the gardens and the cornfields of human fallibility; and it is infinitely better that they should be free to grow --and haply turn out sometimes to be good grain--than that the whole soil of Christianity

* Just. Mart., "Apol.," i. 46.

should be made one burning and waterless Sahara of uniformity, scorched into fruitlessness by tyrannous usurpation. Formal truths may themselves be as perilous as honest errors when Antichrist makes them his domain.

5. "By their fruits," Christ said, "ye shall know them;" and history shall show you the fruits of these errors. I have said that externalism identified with religion is Antichrist. Was it not so, in the days of Charles V., when capons or sausages eaten on Good Friday, or singing the Psalms of Clement Marot, or even reading in the vernacular the Sermon on the Mount, led to the gibbet or the stake, while the imperial persecutor himself, surrounded by adulatory and subservient priests, wallowed in lies and adulteries, which were easily condoned? Was it not so under the pious sway of that devoted Catholic, Louis XIV., who spent the early years of his reign in immoralities and blood, wars of ambition, and the latter years in torturing and dragonnading his Protestant subjects, and crushing out all that remained in his kingdom of vital religion, whether among the disciples of Pascal or the co-religionists of Coligny? And that superstition—those false types of religion and of goodness, which before the Reformation maddened the souls, and darkened the intellects, and tortured the bodies, and depraved the whole lives of men into useless agonies—

what were the fruits of that Antichrist? In what respect were the self-macerations of mediæval saints better *intrinsically* than those by which they are far surpassed—the horrors self-inflicted by Mohammedan dervishes, and Buddhist 'amas, and Indian yogis? And did not this superstition commit in Christ's desecrated name atrocities too infamous to be narrated? Did it not toss the innocent infants of the Albigeois on the spear-points of the Pope's ribald soldiery? Did it not roll mothers and infants of the Vaudois down the rocks on the Alpine mountains cold? And did not a self-styled orthodoxy do the worst deeds of Antichrist? Did it not conjure up the sanguinary ferocity which made Philip II. laugh aloud for joy, and sent Pope Gregory XIII., and his priests, and his cardinals, to chant *Te Deums* in abhorrent thanks to God for "the signal blessings vouchsafed to the Holy See" by the foul murder of forty thousand Huguenots? Does not this Antichrist of self-adoring orthodoxy become spiritual pride and ambitious egotism, when men identify their own fallible notions with the truths of God, and all opposition to themselves as hostility to God? Antichrist is often more in favour with multitudes, than the true Christ has been. The rulers of this world knew not the hidden wisdom of God; for had they

known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Face loved of little children long ago,
 Head hated by the Priests and Rulers then,
 Say was not this thy passion--to foreknow
 In thy death's hour the needs of Christian men?

6. These, then, are the outcomes of false religion, usurping the titles and phrases of the true, superstition, cruelty, tyranny, massacres, pretence, pious frauds, the auto da fé, the Inquisition. The fruits of Antichrist are gloom, terror, abjectness, pettiness, subterranean intrigues, agonizing self-introspections, morbid self-tortures, burdensome ceremonialism, dependence on the usurped authority of fallible and feeble men. But the fruits of Christ are love, joy, peace, manliness, freedom, sincerity, breadth, confidence, free access to God through the ever open veil. We must take our choice: at our pleasure, but also at our peril.

7. Briefly, and in conclusion, St. John tells us two ways how we may escape, or partially escape, the wiles and seductions of false religion, as well as of alluring worldliness.

i. The one is by taking Christ, and Christ only, as our teacher. Go to that sweet fountain-head of living water, not to the miry stagnancy of human traditions. Reject all teaching which is not His; cast aside all religion which is not after His spirit; and do not be deluded

by the immeasurable spiral of false inferences which claims to be drawn out of His plain words. From the puerilities of a false theology, and the aberrations of a real superstition, and the usurpations over your free hearts and consciences of any who would fain thrust themselves between you and Him, turn yourselves to Him alone. Steep yourselves in His light. Lift up your eyes to the Good Shepherd, to the King in His beauty, the divine ideal of all joy, of all freedom, of all love, of all compassion, of all that is truly manly and truly God.

ii. The other test to which St. John refers here, and again and yet again, is godliness, righteousness, holiness, sincerity. This and nothing else is the proof of sonship. "That sacred and surpassing majesty," says an old Church teacher, "requires from man nothing more than innocence alone; and if any one has presented this, he has sacrificed with sufficient piety to God, whose sacrifices are gentleness of spirit, and an innocent life, and good deeds." * Religion is—as Whichcote wisely defines it—"a good mind and a good life." If you have not that you are not religious, though you were building altars, and offering sacrifices, all day long. The confession of Christ on which St. John insists is the confession ratified by deeds. Again and again he says, "whosoever doeth not

* Lactantius, vi. i.

righteousness is not of God." You cannot become godly or dear to God, or be one with Christ, or have life in Him, by anything save prayer and faith and watchfulness and effort; by being a good son or a good daughter; by being manly and glad and kind; hearty, healthful, helpful; by being uncensorious in your judgments, large in your sympathies, truthful in your words, humble in your self-estimation; by being good and doing good. Your doing good is not a propensity which is at all likely to be pushed to dangerous extremes, although talking about it certainly may. Christianity is Christlikeness. "It is not to multiply theological technicalities; it is not to build one church spire higher than another; it is not to furnish grindstones on which pugnacious bigots may whet their little swords; no! but it is to gather up a shattered and overthrown humanity; to reburnish the living stones on which the fire of an enemy has left the trace of its fury; to rebuild the fallen empire of manhood, until it shall be beautiful and holy as a palace built for God." Piety is "to edify your neighbour; to love him as yourself; to esteem all men as one in Christ; to rejoice at your neighbour's welfare as if it were your own; to correct the erring gently; to instruct the ignorant; to raise the fallen; to succour those that are in want; in a word, to do good in

Christ's name to all to whom you can do good": - that is the religion which your Saviour loves. To labour for this for Christ's sake is righteousness. Every one that doeth righteousness is begotten of God.

XIII.

Realized Sonship.

"Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of God; and such we are."—I JOHN iii. 1.

BOTH and comprehensive so far have been the teachings of the disciple whom Jesus loved: but already the question arises (and I know that there are some of you on whose minds the question has thrust itself), *How* are we to obey these commandments? And in his indirect way St. John gives the deep and sufficient answers—the first of which will be our subject this morning.

"Behold," he says, "the marvellous love which the Father hath given us, that we should be called children of God!" "Children" of God; St. John uses this word children (τέκνα), not as in our Authorized Version "sons" (υἱοί), which is the word used by St. Paul. He would call attention, not to the adoptive act, but to the antecedent, eternal, natural relation. God has freely given us His love, in

order that our title may be children of God—and in the true reading, he adds, “and such we are.” Children we now are; in recognized name, in real fact; what we shall be hereafter we know not; but that shall be manifested in due time; and when it is manifested, then, beloved, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. “When we wake up after His likeness, we shall be satisfied with it.” The image which now we bear shall become the perfect semblance. We shall be like clouds, cradled near the sun, dyed, bathed, transfused with its glowing beams; their lurid menace softened, their darkness palpitating with reflected splendour—their very substance transformed from gloom to whiteness, from whiteness to crimson, from crimson to gold, from gold to sunbeams—changed into the same image, from glory to glory.

2. Here, then, is the motive to aim after, and the power to attain to the infinite promises. How are we to gain life and fellowship? St. John says by the confidence of our childrenhood to God.

But is not this “an impossible presumption”? We—such as we—children of God! We—such as we—the inheritors of blessings potentially infinite! We look round us, and we cannot shut our eyes to the unlovely reality of man’s meanness and man’s misery. And are

these—these “hunger and thirsts, these fevers and appetites,” which bear the semblance of manhood and of womanhood; these evil men and seducers, these unmotherly mothers and unwomanly women—these pickers and stealers, these liars and slanderers, these gesticulating hypocrisies, these incarnate lusts, and hatreds, and envies, these worst ghosts—not souls without bodies, but bodies without souls—are these to be called children of God? Satan points to these, and sneers at the enormous pretension, and laughs as he asks the scornful question. And we—we, when our hearts know their own bitterness; when we think of all our wasted time, of all our unhallowed thoughts, of all our unworthy deeds; of how infinitely far we fall short not only of the highest, but of any true ideal of the elementary graces of Christianity, can we, any more than they, dare to call ourselves “children of God”? Satan points us to that awful thing, a naked human soul; points out to us our moral failure, our spiritual falsity; and then, to our discouraged faithlessness, he whispers, “There! it is all delusion; your grandeur is a sceptre of straw; the heaven of which you dream is but a palace of ice in the moonshine; fling aside your mask; eat, drink, enjoy yourself; the rest is nothing. You know not whence you are; you know not what you are; you know not whither you are

going. *You* children of God," he says—and the question is greeted as with echoes of demoniac laughter—"nay, you are a dream! You are 'a shadow less than shade, a nothing less than nothing.' Here—live for the present, not for the dubious future; for the real world, not for an imaginary heaven. Here, take this gold; drink this sparkling cup of human life, which I offer you, let no flower of the spring pass by you; crown yourselves with rosebuds before they be withered!" And so he thrusts those who listen to his whisper first into the wretchlessness of unclean living, and then, through that, into loathing satiety and utter desperation. It is the moral of the old legend of the Quest of the Holy Grail. The young knights ride forth nominally to seek it; but the soul of one is stained with sin, and that of another steeped in frivolity; and they all—all but one, whose heart is pure and his soul in earnest—fail, and are broken; and to one of them, whose thoughts are full of worldliness and vain-glory, everything seems to slip into dust and ashes.

And every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke, and cried, "This Quest is not for thee!"
And, lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death:
And I, too, cried, "This Quest is not for thee."

3. It is, then, Satan's object to persuade us that we are not children of God ; and when men yield to his coarser temptations they *do* cease to believe it. He sets the world in their hearts, so that they cannot see God. But where his more gross temptations fail, he comes, like an Angel of Light, in the " weet guise of humility." The missionary Ziegenbalg tells us that in translating our text with the aid of a Hindoo youth, the youth rendered it "that we should be allowed to kiss His feet." When asked why he thus diverged from the text he said, "'Children of God!' that is too much --too high!" Such shrinking was excusable in heathen converts, to whom these truths came in a burst of light, too dazzling for their weak eyes. It is not excusable in us. In us it involves nothing less than a denial of the faith, which is the sole source of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. The result of listening to these plausible doubts and denials of Satan, even when they pretend to arise from nothing but proper humility, is fatal. It is no true humility to disbelieve what God tells us ; to set aside, because we are unworthy of it, the privilege which He bestows on us ; to refuse the wedding garment which He offers us. My friends, no absurdity could be so monstrous as to call ourselves God's children, if *He* did not call us such, make

us such, desire us to be such ; but when He does---as He did by the express teaching of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ---faith and our filial relation demand that we believe His word, that we obey His call. Let no man, says St. Paul, beguile you of your reward in voluntary humility and worshipping of angels---which things have indeed a show of wisdom in will-worship and humility and severity to the body ; but are not of any value against the indulgence of the flesh.

It is the virus of false religion that it does not wholly and frankly believe that we are children of God. It delights rather in self-degradation, and impeded access, and morbid penances. It substitutes an agonized shrinking for that filial gaze, that confidence towards God which Christ desires and will bestow. Christ says, Drink of the water of life freely, without money, without price. Antichrist says, This is a mistake ; It can only be bought, and that at a frightful cost. You must purchase it by making your life a hideous and unnatural continuity of emotionalism and torture. Christ calls us to the spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind : Antichrist to the spirit of terror and bondage. Christ calls us to see in God a Father of all love : Antichrist to see a wrathful and furious tyrant, who must be flattered by petty observances, and appeased by agonizing self-

macérations. The Spirit and the Bride say "Come"; and Antichrist says you must not think of being so full of audacity as to come direct to Christ. You must go to the Virgin Mary; you must go to saints; you must put your souls, and your necks, and your consciences under the feet of priests; and perhaps, if you do what they tell you, they may ultimately persuade Christ to admit you. Mark the difference! The doctrine of the great Apostasy only admits you to God through endless antechambers and countless barriers, to be passed through with elaborate prostrations, and with a priest and a penance, a human tradition, and a burdensome ordinance to take toll at every door; but Christ rends the veil of the Holiest in twain from top to bottom, and beckons us to come directly in, and fling ourselves in a transport of gratitude and happy tears, washed, sanctified, forgiven prodigals at the feet of Him whose arms of mercy are outstretched to uplift us, to embrace us, to enfold us to His heart of love for evermore.

4. How, you ask, are you to obey God? how to obtain His promises? how overcome sin? how trample on Satan? What are you to do to inherit eternal life? St. John's answer is, "Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God"; yea—and in spite of Satan, in

spite of Antichrist, and in spite of ourselves--such we are! And he says, "Little children, abide in Him." Do not forego your rights. Do not forget what you are. Do not sink into the condition of animals. Do not reel back into the beast from your divine humanity. Let the ape, and the tiger, and the serpent die. If you try to live by yourself, you will bear no fruit. If you live to yourself, you will be a wretched egotist --worthless to God and man. Accept, then, your high privilege. God, of His own free and infinite love, calls you His children, claims you as His children in His only begotten Son. Wonder at the announcement as much as you can. Refer it to God altogether, not to yourselves. See in it the proof of what God is and of what you are. But do not deny it; for, if you do, you deny that you can do what God bids you do. Say not "it is impossible," for that could only mean that it is impossible for you not to be unrighteous. Unreal religion will try to persuade you that, at the best, you are slaves, not sons; but God wants dear sons, not cowed and abject and trembling slaves. The world would deride the notion that you are sons. That is one of your difficulties, one of your temptations; but remember that the world knoweth you not, because it knew Him not. And so when God's appealing voice cries unto us, "Wilt thou not say unto me, at this

time, My Father, thou art the guide of my youth?" we will answer, "Surely 'Thou art our Father, and we are 'Thy' sons and daughters for evermore."

5. But then, once more quoting Scripture for his purpose, the devil says to you in the voice of religious error, "Ah! but you have forfeited your privilege: your state is changed. 'He that doeth righteousness is born of Him,' and you are not righteous. You must therefore make yourselves righteous. You must do this, and do that; and not touch this, and not taste that." Ah! my friends, it is the wrong way! Self-righteousness may make you think yourself righteous; may make you despise others; may make you fancy that you and your clique are God's special favourites; and that you are not unorthodox like this heretic, or unchurchly like that latitudinarian. Ah! poor soul, in the feeble invalidism of thy self-admired virtuousness, didst thou then make thyself God's child? Not so! "We do not attach ourselves to Christ by our own righteous acts; but because we are attached to Christ we are able to perform righteous acts. We do not make ourselves God's children because we are good; but being the children of a good God, we can live as His children." The divine efficacy of the sonship which Christ came to bestow by taking our nature upon Him, lies in the self-reverence which it inspires. Yea!

we have sinned,—the crown has fallen from our heads, for we have sinned. But, “rejoice not against me, O mine enemy; when I fall I shall arise.” For we are God’s children, and we will abide in Christ; and you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him is no sin. Antichrist—the demon-angel of Satan—would first encourage us in abjectness, and then heal the self-induced disease by the sham remedy. Christ reminds us of what we are; of what He has made us. He gives us, first, confidence; then the righteousness of simple obedience, rendered possible by faith in His divinely granted strength.

6. And as this sense of sonship is thus the defeat of Antichrist, so also it is the deliverance from the worldliness against which John warned us. Children of God—God’s love gave us the title—and such we are; and what then are our proper privileges? Are we to eat and drink and sleep, as though we were animals? or to forget, to be distrustful, to despair as if we were fiends? or are we to remember, to trust, to hope, as dear children? Is our true nature expressed by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the braggart vaunt of life; or by admiration, hope, and love? My friends, look at the state of mind caused by the abandonment of sonship to God, and the love of the world instead of God. Look at the weariness

of life, the utter disappointment, the exhaustion of every interest, to which the worldling confesses. If we love the world, how does the loss of the spring of youth, how do petty cares, anticipated evils, haunting memories; "steal away hour by hour something of our life"! How many men do we see, surrounded by comforts, yet wholly without comfort; full of vague, vacant, unsatisfied longing; caring for none, and by none beloved! How many young men do we see with listless faces; exhausted before the dawn is off their cheeks, with no resources left but the bastard hopes of the dice-box, or the Satanic excitement and bestial unconsciousness of the bottle! Ah! how shall their life, how shall the fatal exhaustion of nations, be restored? Only in St. John's way. Only by bathing in the fountain of life, by the sense of, and the claim to, our actual, our divine, our heaven-bestowed privilege! We are too noble thus to perish, too noble to be content with these husks; to live among these swine; to leave our souls in this mud of sensuality and despair. We cannot, we will not, welter for ever in this oblivious pool. Satan says to us, "Your state is changed; you have no longer a right to the name of God's children." And we answer, "Get thee behind us, Satan!" Through God we can do great acts, and it is He that shall tread down our enemies.

We can do righteousness; for we are born of Him. His Christ has redeemed us. His Spirit has not deserted us. God is our hope and strength: the worst sinner may hope in Him, that he shall grow better, that he too shall become a true man; because he too, however lost, however fallen, is a child of God. And so, like St. Antony, we defy Satan, and say to him, "Thou art altogether pitiful, and henceforth, God helping me His child, I will no longer bestow a thought on thee." Like the dying St. Martin of Tours, when he thought he saw the devil standing near him, we say, "What doest thou here, cruel one? Thou shalt find no share in me." And like our dying hero king, Henry V., we say, "Get thee hence, Satan; thou hast no part or lot in me. My part is with the Lord Jesus Christ." Salvation, the present deliverance from sin, the rebrightening within us of the divine nature, the renewal of our souls after the image of God in righteousness and true holiness, is only possible by faith; and salvation by faith is only, in other words, the love of God by the knowledge of God, or the true recovery of the image of God by a true spiritual acquaintance with Him. As an ancient Father says, "They who are sick need a Saviour; they who have wandered, a guide; they who are blind, one who shall lead them to

the light ; they who thirst, the living fountain, of which he who partakes shall thirst no more ; the dead need life ; the sheep, a shepherd ; children, a tutor ; all mankind need Jesus." Jesus a Saviour—and " to save man is the greatest and most royal work of God." Ah, my friends, let us seek to know God by a knowledge real, continuous, direct, the foundation of service : let us try to take home to ourselves, let us try to feel in ourselves, all the saving power that is in this word of St. Paul : " And because ye are sons, God sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying Abba Father ;" and in this of St. John : " Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called children of God : nor is this a mere title or recognition, for ' such we are ! ' "

XIV.

The Results of the Sense of Sonship.

HOPE, AND EFFORT AT SELF-PURIFICATION.

“And every one that hath this hope set on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure.”—1 JOHN iii. 3.

THERE is far more in this verse than I can adequately bring out of it; yet that which we all may gain from it ought, I think, to be intensely practical. We have seen already that, for the remedy of the Fall, for the realization of life, and of fellowship with God, St. John points us to Christ as our propitiation, and Christ as our Advocate. And as tests of our personal share in these exceeding great and precious promises, he indicates obedience to God, and imitation of Christ. And as means whereby we may meet these tests, he bids us realize the transcendent love which God has given us that we may be called children of God; and such we are. And now, in this verse, he tells us how this sense of sonship works; that it is the main-

spring of the impulse and the endeavour whereby we may, with the fear and trembling of holy joy, work out our own salvation. The sense of Sonship inspires Hope; Hope leads to Effort, "He that hath this hope on Him purifieth himself, even as He is pure."

i. Before examining this new thought, let us clear it of all misconceptions and difficulties.

i. The verse is wrongly rendered in our Authorized Version; and nine times out of ten you hear it wrongly read. It is not "he that hath this hope in him" (*i.e.*, in himself)—though perhaps you may never have heard it otherwise; but "he that hath this hope (*ἐπ' αὐτῷ*) on Him"—*i.e.*, on God: he that thus trusts in, and depends on, God. He who, in the world's stormy ocean, hath this anchor of the soul sure and steadfast, "purifieth himself, even as He (*ἐκεῖνος*)—even as Christ is pure:"

ii. Such is the rendering of the text, but even then it suggests two difficulties.

a. First, how can any man purify *himself* from sin? Has not St. John already said, "If any man sin we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, and *He* is the propitiation for our sins"? and "The blood of Jesus Christ, His Son, cleanseth us from all sin"? Yes! St. John loves to make us think

for ourselves by these striking contrasts, these broad verbal contradictories, which involve complemental truths. There is a sense in which a man partly can, and a sense in which he absolutely cannot, purify himself. He cannot do it himself, yet it cannot be done without himself. It can only be done by his uniting his own will to the will of God.

There are in sin two elements—its guilt and its power: its guilt as regards the past; its power over the present. But how can a man deliver himself from his past? That “dark backward, and abysm of time” is not his; he has no power over it. In all its folly—it may be in all its foulness, in all its ugliness—his past must ever be his past; carried through the universe on the wings of light, on the waves of sound, irrevocable, irremediable, indestructible. And which of us all is content with his past?

Vain was the man, and false as vain,
Who said, “Were he ordained to run
The brief career of life again,
He would do all that he had done.”
Ah! ’tis not thus the voice that dwells
In sober birthdays speaks to me;
Far otherwise: of time it tells
Lavished unwisely, carelessly;
Of counsel mocked—of talents made
Haply for high and pure designs,
But out, like Israel’s incense, laid
Upon unholy, earthly shrines. . . .

All this it tells, and could I trace
The imperfect picture o'er again,
With power to add, retouch, efface
The light and shades, the joy and pain,
How little of the past would stay !
How quickly all should melt away.

And alas ! it is vain for man to think any earthly remedy sufficient : vainly the moral leper, affronted by the simplicity of God's way of salvation, asks, " Are not Abanah and Pharpar, waters of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel ? may I not wash in them and be clean ? " His own conscience gives the answer : If I wash myself with snow-water, and make my hands never so clean, yet wilt thou plunge me in the ditch, and mine own clothes shall abhor me." Oceans will not wash away the guilt of man ; and rivers of tears " may drown sooner than cleanse it." Penance will not atone for it ; nor deeds of charity ; nor blind devotion ; nor the maze of human inventions ; nor hecatombs of whole burnt-offerings, nor to give our first-born for our transgression, the fruit of our body for the sin of our souls. They who think that they can thus, as it were, make God amends, and that " their pitiful broken mite can pay those ten thousand talents," know not either the fiery strictness of the Law nor the divine spirituality of the Gospel. It may not be ; it cannot be. It cost more to

redeem our souls, so that we must let that alone for ever. In this sense no man can purify himself. Yes! but the work has been done—done already, for the penitent. Christ has done it. Sin forsaken means also sin forgiven. When once we have learnt effectually and with all our hearts, even it may be by means of evil, that good is best; when once our repentance is sincere—then in Christ's blood we are cleansed from the crimson stains of our past guilt. Our sins and our iniquities, He then remembereth them no more. After a terrible catalogue of iniquity, St. Paul says to the Corinthians, "And these things were some of you: but ye were washed, but ye were sanctified, but ye were justified, in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God."

b. But if we cannot purify ourselves from the guilt of sin, can we do so any more from its power? What will avail us the cleansing of the past stain, if it leaves us the hopeless victims of sin's present dominion? Can we at any moment check the evil which we have freely admitted into our own hearts—blinding the eyes, petrifying the feelings, polluting the very springs of action? We are what we are; what we have made ourselves. And "who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean"? "How can a man be born again when he is old"? Is it not

of God only that cometh both the will and the power to do His good pleasure? And if you bid us still purify ourselves from the power of sin, might you not as well bid the limed bird to fly? or the poor worm to throw off the rock which is crushing it? or the fettered prisoner to burst his bonds? My friends, God answers those questions for us in His Christ. A man cannot enter a second time into his mother's womb and be born; but he can be born again of water and of the Spirit. The snared bird cannot fly, but the snare is broken by Him, and we are delivered. Helpless prisoners we should be indeed, but He hath burst the gates of brass and smitten the bars of iron in sunder. We cannot convert ourselves; but His Spirit is ever drawing us, and His hand leading us. We cannot abstain from sin of ourselves, but He giveth us strength to help in time of need. Neither primarily, nor unaided, are we bidden to purify ourselves—but only through His inspiration, only by His help. All that we are bidden to do is to yield to that inspiration; to obey that summons; not to resist, not to grieve, not to quench that Holy Spirit of God, whereby we are sealed to the day of redemption. If we were left to our own pitiful feebleness, then, like that futile king of early English legend, when once we have exposed ourselves to the rising tide of evil,

We might as well go stand upon the beach,
And bid the main flood bate his usual height.

But it is not in our own name, but in God's name—in the name of Him who commanded the winds and the waters, and they obeyed Him—that we stretch our hands to that swelling sea of iniquity, and say, "Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed." So then there is something for *us* to do, as well as something for God to do; and unless we work with God, He cannot work with us. In that sense, He helping us, every one of us can and must purify ourselves. Our wills are ours; but we must make them God's.

iii. But there is a third difficulty—"purifieth himself even as He"—even as Christ—"is pure." How is that possible? What saint has, even remotely, even measurably, attained to the snow-white sinlessness, to the stainless purity of the Son of Man? Read the confessions even of the holiest, and see how, in proportion to their realization of sin's exceeding sinfulness, even *their* hearts ached with its throbbing agony; and how, even in their death-throes, they could but bid their friends to lay crosswise on the ashes, as St. Louis did, and breathe with broken hearts the prayer of the publican. But, my friends, it is not meant, in that sense, that we can ever be pure as Christ. He Himself

has taught us, "When ye have done all that is commanded you" (and that none of us have done), "say, We are unprofitable servants." But the "as He is pure" means similarity of kind, not equality of degree. And of this we cannot be too sure—that, if we desire to resemble Christ in His heavenly state, we must strive to imitate Him in His earthly. As St. John has already taught us, "He that saith he abideth in Him, ought himself also so to walk even as He walked."

II. Having cleared away the difficulties of the text, let us try to take to heart its deep injunction.

i. He that hath this hope *on God*—the hope (that is) that being now a child of God, he shall hereafter be like Him, for "he shall see Him as He is"—purifieth himself. Hope, then, is here made the spring of self-purification. The Gospel is a God-spell of hope, not, as men have made it, a devil-spell of terror. Christ would fain dilate our souls with hope; it is the devil only who would shrivel them up with fear. The devil, coming to us in his own guise, quoting many texts of Scripture, says to the sinner: "You are a reprobate; you are predestined to damnation; why trouble yourself about it now? Why lose both worlds? God after all has His favourites; He is a respecter of persons; except an arbitrarily chosen few (and you are not one of

them); He has doomed all mankind to perish everlastingly. From all eternity you were a vessel made to dishonour. Come, abandon this foolish dream of the distant, the future, the ideal; grasp the near, the present, the actual—stupefy yourself with this gross mud-honey of earthly delight; make money; daub yourself with this thick yellow clay; get what you can out of life: eat, drink, enjoy yourself, for to-morrow you die.” Or again, coming to the self-deceiving saint in the angel-guise of Christ, he tempts him to trust in his own righteousness, or in the creed or sect which he professes, rather than in God. And so, in the one guise or the other, the devil thrusts the publican into desperation and uncleanness; and in the Pharisee he produces self-satisfaction and religious hatred, which crucifies Christ afresh; and, in the formalist, he causes that fatal divorce between belief and conduct which serves his purpose quite as well as atheism itself. But Christ’s Gospel is a Gospel of hope set on God, of hope for all mankind; of hope even for the sinner that he shall become pure because Christ has taken away his sins, and can make him pure. And so hope smiles upon the poor, ruined, despondent soul a smile of healing, and bids it listen to the one yet unbroken string of the shattered harp, and bids it gaze through the darkness

at the star which yet shines softly upon it through the rifted clouds. He that hath fixed his hope not on God but on himself, is an egotist and a sensualist, self-centred, bound up in self, his life spanned by the narrowness of its own dim horizon ; and he who hath fixed his hope not on God, but on some human party or theory or priesthood of his own, has but the poor semblance and phantom of religion. But he who really hath this hope set on God, and not fatally inefficient, nor scared into insensibility, so far from finding it an idle, or nominal, or delusive hope, or a hope to be achieved by a little cheap outward conformity, does not trade for hell while he talks of heaven ; or look upwards while he lives downwards ; or hate the brother whom he pretends to love ; or profess a desire for that whereof he hath scarce a thought ; or expect to enjoy God hereafter, while he lives wholly without Him here ;—nay, but he that hath this hope on God, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure. And how divine a hope it is ! Earthly hope is disappointed in the very fruition ; and bursts like a bubble even in the attainment : and though satiated is never satisfied ; and after the brief fascination of corruption turns a Medusa countenance upon the petrifying heart ; and offers fruit which crumbles into bitter ashes :—but heavenly hope, while her present fruition is ever fresh and verdant, opens

also an illimitable prospect beyond the grave.

. ii. He, then, that hath this hope on God, purifieth himself; his hope necessarily inspires effort. He purifies himself not only with outward cleansing from guilty deeds, but with the inward sprinkling of the conscience, until, by Christ's presence within, it shrinks from a stain as from a wound; and a shame lies on it like a spark of agonizing fire; and it feels that its past sins are forgiven, and that, as to the present, we know that he who, by His grace, doeth righteousness is born of Him.

III. He purifieth himself. Since, then, effort is needed for the realization of this purity, in what directions must it work?

i. First, it must work a repentance which forsakes sin; a repentance not to be repented of. We must learn thereby to say, from our hearts, "I am sorry for my sin." Nor will one act of repentance do. Like the holy and innocent Philip Henry, we must carry our repentance with us even to the gates of heaven. Every true tear is of a cleansing virtue; but these penitential clouds must be still kept dropping. We cannot expect that God should totally wipe these tears from our eyes till He has taken all sin out of our hearts. "Till it be our power and privilege not to sin, it is still our duty to repent"; and even he that is

bathed; has still constant need to wash his feet.

ii. Secondly, this effort needs watchfulness. For sin is watchful, and Satan is watchful. This sly serpent is ever creeping among the fallen leaves of life, ready at a moment to dart its flickering tongue. That crouching wild beast, half hidden in the tangled thicket of our careless hours and evil thoughts, is ever curving his back for the one crashing bound upon his unheeding victim. We never know out of what loose moment his eyeball may not be glaring upon us. Oh! we must watch as well as pray! Can we not watch for Christ this one brief fleeting hour of life? If we do not watch, we sin. And let it be an armed, not an agonizing watch; a bold and manly, not an effeminate and morbid watch; a watch confident through faith and strong in God, not a base crawling at human feet, or an abject leaning on feeble human arms.

iii. And with repentance and watchfulness this effort at self-purification, by the aid of Christ's grace, needs one supreme resolution—what St. Paul calls the putting to death of sin; the slaying of sin in our mortal members with one fierce blow. "He that would lay the axe to the root of his sin, must use it coarsely, and strike it boldly." I fear that the source of half man's ruin is often the lack of this resolute

choice, this mighty determination, made in answer to the call, in reliance on the strength, of God. When, once, from the depths of his personality, a man has cried "Lord, be merciful to me the sinner;" "Lord, I believe, help thou mine unbelief;" "I am Thine, oh save me"—he has taken his first step, and that a great step, to substitute in his life the power of godliness for the power of sin. Men often make sudden desperate snatches at the devil's hook, baited with the abominable, glittering, lacerating lure: will they make no such violent grasp at salvation? It is something, it is much, when a man has thus had the grace, with the strong clutch of a drowning man, to leap up from the oblivious pool of vice and of despair, to swear by God's grace that he will not "sell his eternity for a little hour." Satan's one chief effort is to break down in us the capacity for this splendid purpose, and the hope by which alone it can be inspired; he strives to effeminate within us this divine and regal power which God hath given to man as the crown of his immortality—the power to say "I will." I am convinced that it is for the lack of this that most souls are lost. They fatally procrastinate. They would fain enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; they think that they can bid God wait their time—till they are old and worn out, or at the point

to die. Is it not foul insolence and base ingratitude, thus to offer to the Lord of our life the mere dust of corrupted bodies, the mere shipwreck of polluted souls? Men pour on the altar of devils the bright wine of life; they bid God be content with its ragged lees and muddy sediment. They give to Satan the flower of life in its bud; for God they reserve only the cankered and blighted leaves of which the root has been as rottenness, and the blossom gone up as dust. Ah,

Blessed is the child whose early feet,
Instruction's path have trod,
Whose secret soul by influence sweet
Is upward drawn to God.

But if this blessedness, the blessedness of the innocent, is not yours, then yours be the blessedness of the repentant and of the forgiven. Never despair. Fly to the stronghold, ye prisoners of hope! Remember the glory, cling to the privilege of sonship, and with that hope purify yourselves even as Christ is pure.

iv. And here, lastly, come in the means of grace. They will help you to remember that children of God you are; they will encourage your efforts; they will strengthen your determination; they will quicken your repentance; they will awaken your watchfulness. Meritorious they are in nowise; do not think it; but they may be most helpful. To pride yourself on

them is fatal ; to edify yourself by means of them is most wise. The earnest study of God's Book, and of all God's books ; the quick-eared listening for His voice ; hours of holy meditation, when the soul is alone with Him ; Holy Communion, for which humbly, joyfully, inwardly we have prepared ourselves by thankful remembrance of Christ's death, and by being in charity with all men ; hours of public worship, in which Sunday after Sunday we join, not as a miserable, empty, burdensome form, but with sincere hearts and earnest voices ; sermons listened to, not with cynical weariness or fastidious scorn, but with the desire to learn God's will ; prayer above all, prayer without ceasing, prayers which will not let God go except He bless us—"prayers the only giants that assail the throne of heaven and in the end prevail"—oh, what blessed helps may these be to us ! Observe that, in themselves, they are utterly valueless ; valueless as forms ; valueless quantitatively ; valueless without entire sincerity ; absolutely without any sort or shred or shadow of merit—what the Scripture calls mere filthy rags of our own righteousness—unless they make us humbler, better, kinder, more pure, more loving. It is good to deny yourself, —but "eat an ox and be a Christian." It is good to come to the Holy Communion, yet you might come every day with fifty genuflexions,

and prostrate yourself all the rest of the day before a pyx; and yet, if your heart be false and bitter, it would be, in the words of the prophet, as though one should offer swine's flesh upon the altar. It is good to worship with your brethren in the house of God, yet worthless if you go away unchanged to your daily life. It is good, most good to pray, yet worse than worthless if your prayer be but the pomposity of the Pharisee, the clack of the Tartar's prayer-mill, or the mechanism of idle repetitions. Sincerity, swaying the heart, evinced in the life, breathing through all the words, and deeds, and thoughts; sincerity, proved by obedience to God, speaking in imitation of Christ—it is that, and that only, for which God cares; that, and that only, which gives any value or any meaning to the means of grace. Do not deceive yourselves about this, and let no man deceive you. Religion has no meaning without righteousness. It is deep large faith in God, and no ignoble thoughts of Him. It is true love to our brother, not in name only, but in truth. It is a hope that we are, and that ever more and more we shall be, children of God, not in title only, but in likeness and in life. "And he that hath this hope on Him, purifieth himself even as Christ is pure."

THERE are many other "truths to live by" which we might learn from St. John; but we have now studied together those truths on which all the others are based; and we may find it at once interesting and profitable to consider these and similar truths as they are set forth by the great Apostle of the Gentiles—"that man of the third Heaven"—St. Paul.

II.

AS TAUGHT BY ST. PAUL.

“Cet homme du troisième c. cl.”—BOSSUET.

I.

"All have Sinned."

"All have sinned."—Rom. iii. 23.



THAT remarkable passage of the Book of Habakkuk—"The just shall live by faith"—has moulded the belief of centuries, and is quoted no less than three times in the New Testament. I had scarcely begun to think of it, when it became obvious to me that it could not adequately be set before you in a single sermon. Nothing indeed would be more easy than to deal in a mass of current conventionalities, but I have a horror of conventionalities which may become dead in themselves, and the direct cause of the death of uncharitable self-complacency in others. What I would earnestly desire, my friends, is that we may all be enabled to understand not the "tame, lifeless, monotonous phrases into which theology has frozen the Gospel," but the bright, living, regenerating truths which they sometimes only harden and conceal. I pray above all that what

I say now and always should be intensely true to myself, and at least transparently clear to you. I saw, then, that only by following St. Paul's own method could we be enabled to grasp what he meant by justification and by faith. I have not often dwelt in this pulpit upon dogmatic definitions, because it seems to me the true function of the pulpit is the endeavour to make men better, purer, more loving, and because there is no proof of the efficacy of stereotyped system and rigid formula to produce such high results. And yet, desiring as far as possible to set before you the whole counsel of God, I purpose, God willing, to devote some Sunday mornings to the endeavour to make clear to you—in a simple and straightforward manner, and with intentional avoidance of the mere technicalities of theological language—what was, in its very essence, the doctrine, the Gospel, the theology of St. Paul.

1. The theology of St. Paul, like all true theology, starts at once from the thought of God. If we cannot know our God—if our notions of what is right, and just, and merciful are wholly unlike His righteousness, and His justice, and His mercy—then our preaching is vain, and your faith is vain, and all is vain. If that be so, religion is a delusion, and life a dream. In one sense, of course, we cannot know God. We cannot know Him fully; we

cannot know Him in His infinitude. "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection?" No. Let it rebuke the familiarity of religionism, that the arm of man cannot measure the finger of God, and that the pompous wisdom with which men assume to wield His thunders, is but ignorance and folly. But though we can only see as it were the clouds that roll around His glory, or at the best that paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in its clearness whereon stands His throne, yet this we know, that God is holy, and that God is love; that to be with Him we must be like Him; that without holiness no man can see His face. And we are not holy. Some are more holy than others in the eyes of man; but even saints know that, in the eyes of God, they too are but sinners. Some are forgiven, some are unforgiven. Some are growing better and better as life goes on, others worse and worse. Some are pure, some impure; some are drunken, some temperate; some by their lives are helping to make earth brighter and better, and others to make it more wretched and depraved. But all have sinned. How can even the purest stand before Him who chargeth His angels with folly, and before whom the very heavens are not clean? God says to every one of us, "Be ye holy, for I am holy." Most of us are

not holy, by any means or at all. Even the holiest must say, "We are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags." Yea, the holiest feel it most, and are ever ready to cry, "We all do fade as a leaf, and our iniquities like the wind take us away."

2. But instead of going home contented with an emotional utterance, or a comprehensive phrase, let us all try to realize this one fact in all its dread significance—that God is holy, that man is unholy; that God is in heaven, and we on earth; that God is infinite righteousness, and that this is a world of abysmal sin. It is not necessary now to enter, any more than did St. Paul, into a definition of what sin is, or wherein consists its special sinfulness. You know what sin is. There is not even a child here present who does not know it, who is not conscious of it, who is not less happy because of it. In the brief comprehensive words of the Apostle, "All have sinned." It was the keystone of his system; it was the fundamental fact which made his Gospel seem so necessary and so blessed.

3. But how does St. Paul prove it? You will see the answer in the first two chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. He proves it, not speculatively but historically; not by logic but by experience; not by the development of a theory, but by an appeal to fact, Mankind

in his days was divided into two great sections—Jews and Gentiles—with no consciousness as yet that the middle wall of partition which separated them from each other had been finally broken down. Each section hated, each despised, the other. The Jew despised the Gentile as a shameful reprobate; the Gentile hated the Jew as a grovelling impostor. But neither realized their true condition; neither was at all awake to the fact that they had sinned.

i. Certainly the Gentiles were not. Paul begins with them. They were, as a class, dead to all sense of sin; they were in that meridian of evil which St. Paul calls "past feeling." A stage there may have been in the national as in the individual life, in which they may have felt their guiltiness; early in their career, before the love of innocence was dead, before the tenderness of conscience was seared; and later, too, the stage came to them which comes to all when "the Furies took their seats upon the midnight pillow." But from the soul of their youth the sense of wounded innocence was too often swept away like the dew from the green grass; and from the social life it vanished in universal corruption. The life of Greece, for which some writers sigh as having been so infinite in fascination, was bright, no doubt, in its first gaiety, in its ideal freshness. But when youth was gone; when strength

failed ; when health was shattered ; when on the dead flowers of life age shed its snows ; when death came nearer and nearer with the dull monotony of his echoing footfall, and they saw no life beyond—life in Hellas was not gay then. Take her at her most brilliant period, when her most immortal temples were built, her most immortal songs written, her most immortal statues carved, and we see the seamy side and ragged edges of the life of Greece, revealed in the sensual wickedness of Aristophanes ; we see its fierce, untamed, soul-rending passions recorded in the stern pages of Thucydides. Her own poets, her own satirists, her own historians will teach us that to have been naked and not ashamed was to have been expelled from Paradise ; to be past feeling for sin was to be removed utterly from even the possibility of blessedness. And as for the Roman—

On that hard Pagan world disgust
And secret loathing fell ;
Deep weariness and sated lust
Made human life a hell.

In his cool hall, with haggard eyes,
The Roman noble lay ;
He drove abroad, in furious guise,
Along the Appian Way.

He made a feast, drank fierce and fast,
And crown'd his hair with flowers ;
No easier, nor no quicker, passed
The impracticable hours.

And of Paganism in its decadence it may be truly said—

Stout was its arm, each threw and bone
Seemed puissant and alive ;
But ah, its heart, its heart was stone,
And so it could not thrive.

Yes, the Greeks and Romans knew but too well that life is bitter with misery ; but they never recognized the cause of this, in its being sick with sin.

ii. Nor did the Jew. So far from feeling himself sinful, he looked on himself alone as being the just, the upright, the chosen. He spoke with contemptuous disgust of the Gentiles as sinners and dogs and swine. Of course, in a vague general way, he assented to vague general confessions, as when the High Priest laid his hands on the head of the scapegoat, and said, "O God, the God of Israel, pardon our iniquities, our transgressions, and our sins." But, on the whole, in the Pharisaic epoch, which began even in the days of Ezra, the Jew was infinitely satisfied with himself. He held (as the Talmud often shows us) that no Jew could possibly be rejected ; that God looked on him with absolute favouritism ; that the meanest son of Israel was a prince of the kings of the earth. The pride which caused this serene unconsciousness of their own guilt—the fact that they so

little recognized the plague of their own hearts, was the worst thing for them. They knew not that they were miserable, poor, blind and naked. It was the self-induced callosity of formalism. It was the penal blindness of moral self-conceit. "Are we blind also?" asked the astonished Pharisees of Christ. And He said unto them, "If ye were blind, ye would have no sin; but now ye say, We see, therefore your sin remaineth." The fact, then, that alike Jew and Gentile were ignorant of their own guilty condition was the deadliest element of their danger.

For when we in our wickedness grow hard,
O misery on't, the wise gods seal our eyes;
In our own filth drop our clear judgments; make us
Adore our errors; laugh at us while we strut
To our confusion.

It was, **then**, an essential element in Paul's teaching, an essential preparation for his Gospel, that he should convince them all of sin. Until he convinced, neither could they be convinced of righteousness or of judgment. Until they knew how deep was the darkness, they could not love the light, nor come to the light, that their deeds might be reprovèd.

4. St. Paul begins, then, with the trial and conviction of the gay and godless Gentiles. They might perhaps plead that they were not responsible; that they had no law like the Jews; that they had not been entrusted with

the oracles of God. Informally, but very unmistakably, he cuts away from them this excuse. He shows them that God had given them two ways to attain to the knowledge of Himself and of His will: the one without, the other within. Nature would have taught them the being of God; conscience would have revealed to them His will; yet they had not learnt God from His works. Though His invisible things were clearly visible in His universe; though stars and sunsets, and mountains and the rolling sea, might have taught them that He was the Eternal King, yet, blind and thankless, they became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened, and, becoming fools in their fancied wisdom, they sank down and down in their idolatries, till, as in Egypt, they worshipped birds and beasts and reptiles—the ibis, the beetle, and the snake. And conscience, too, they scared. Moral degradation ensued on intellectual ignorance. Since they refused God, God abandoned them to a refuse mind. No Christian words can describe the depths of heathen abominations as they upheaved their turbid Erebus of waters in the days of the later Roman Empire. The wine of pleasure had run to its foulest and most bitter lees. The God whom they gave up, gave up them to passions of infamy. Their homes were cursed with disobedience, falsity, the death of natural affec-

tion. The sacredness of their wedlock was destroyed by the fatal facility of divorce. Their trade was poisoned by meanness, dishonesty, covetousness. Their society was turbid with envy, murder, malignity. Their hearts were corroded, through and through, with pollution and impurity. They became, worst of all, tempters of others: inventors of evil things; knowing that such sins were worthy of death, they not only did such things, but had pleasure in those who did them. Thus does St. Paul seize as it were the harlot of Paganism by the glittering locks, and brand deep into her forehead the festering stigma of her shame. There are some, who, in terrible apostasy from all that is holy and beautiful in Christianity, are always sighing for what they call the frank naturalism of the Pagan life. It is well for the world that Paul should have proved to us, for ever, what leprous features lay under the tinted mask; what ugliness and anguish may be concealed by painted cheek and venal smile.

But, on the other hand, the Jew had not been left to the unwritten law of nature and of conscience. He had a law, and not only so, but was very proud of it—paid scrupulous adhesion to its minutest regulations. With consummate tact, yet crushing plainness, St. Paul shows the Jew that he, too, was just what he called the Gentile—a sinner. There is exquisite irony in

his method. Using the language of apparent congratulation, he says, If thou bearest the proud name of Jew and makest the law the pillow of thy confidence, and makest God thy boast, and art convinced that thou art in thy own person a leader of the blind, an instructor of poor foolish people who know not the law and are accursed - there, in a few touches, stands, before us and in all his empty arrogance, the full-blown Pharisee! and then, dropping all irony, and turning on him with plain terrible questions, he asks the Jew "Do you practise what you teach? You denounce theft; are you honest? You denounce adultery; are you pure? You denounce idolatry, are you a defrauder and withholder of what belongs to God? In one word, you boast of the law, do you keep it?" The pages of Josephus and of secular historians answer loudly in the negative. The Jew was doubly at fault; wrong in his religion, wrong in his irreligion; wrong in the letter, wrong in the spirit. Wrong in the letter, for he broke it, while he made a fetish of it; wrong in the spirit, for he had not learned what that meaneth, "I will have mercy, and not sacrifice." No man had ever more studied the letter of his Scriptures, no man more fatally perverted their meaning, no man professed to reverence them more, no man understood them so little. The religious Jew

had thought it enough to put mezuzoth on his doors and phylacteries on his forehead, and to tithe the stalks of pot-herbs, and to cover the beauty of holiness with a scurf of meaningless observances. The irreligious Jew was openly and flagrantly immoral. His religion was but a worse and more deadening idolatry. He relied for his salvation on rubrics, not on righteousness ; on things which priests did for him, not on holiness before God ; on the cleansing of the outside of the cup and the platter, not on love to God shown by love to man ; on the cheap littleness of long prayers and ostentatious functions, not on the sincerity of the heart.

5. Thus, then, did the Apostle prove his terrible thesis that "all have sinned."

And is that thesis less true now? We are not Jews, nor Gentiles, but Christians. Is Paul's hamartiology, his doctrine of sin, obsolete? or is there for us, too, an awful truth in all he says? Take England, Christian England, here in London, now in the nineteenth century. Is it less true now that all have sinned? Take the irreligious world—the vast masses who do not even profess religion, who never approach a sacrament, who never set foot in a place of worship. Take the vast army of unhappy drunkards, reeling through a miserable life to a dishonoured grave. Take the countless victims of sins of impurity.

Take trade and commerce, with its adulterations, its dishonesties, its reckless greed, its internecine struggles between capital and toil, Are there mere words, or are they indisputable facts? If you do not believe the pulpit, will you believe the *Times*? What was written the other day of a great and flourishing Scotch bank, under directors of high repute, whose shameful failure plunged thousands of the innocent into misery and ruin? Here is the extract: "Accounts have been deliberately falsified; securities entered at fictitious values; bad debts taken as good assets; the gold squandered; Government deceived by false returns; shareholders deluded by 'cooked' balance-sheets; the bank behaving like an insane gambler, mad to be rid of his fortune; then, in worse and worse dishonesty, splendid dividends paid, and false reports issued, and this year after year with deliberate and long-continued deceit, until a fraudulent bank became a national misfortune." Does that case stand alone? Then, again, is there no gambling, alike among rich and poor? Are there no wild, greedy, dishonest speculations? Is the common conversation of men what it should be? Is the drink trade and its consequences an honour to us? Do you think that God looks with approval on the opium traffic of England? Are the amusements of the nation satisfactory?

Can we regard with complacency the accessories of the turf? Are the streets of London—recking as they do with open and shameless temptation—what the streets of a Christian capital ought to be? Would a Paul or an Elijah have had no burning words of scathing denunciation at what the stage and the opera sometimes offer to the rich, and the music-hall and the dancing-room to the poor? How many of the rich understand what it means to be generous? How many of the poor are alive to the duty and dignity of self-respect? Are there no base and godless newspapers? Did not a great statesman write but recently about “one of the thousands of lies, invented by knaves and believed by fools”? Is the general tone of what is called society, healthy—with its gossip, and its fashion, and its luxury, and its selfish acquiescence in the scathing misery around? Ah, my brethren, where shall I stop? Do you think that God sees these things as men see them? If preachers but seldom ask these questions, do you think that God will never ask them? Ah, be not deceived! the justice of Heaven is neither timid nor remiss!

O. But then you will ask, But is there not the religious world? Do not we come to church? Do not some of us even attend the sacrament? Are not we highly respect-

able? Are we not good Evangelicals or good Churchmen? Are we not orthodox about Justification by Faith, or the efficacy of Baptism? Yes, my brethren, there are true saints—

Ay, there are saints, which are not like the painted
And haloed figures blazoned on the pane,
Not outwardly and visibly ensanted,
But hiding deep the light that they contain.

We have known some of them; we have seen their faces, and not in dreams—beautiful, gentle, holy, loving souls, strong and glowing as fire, pure and transparent as crystal, above the common vulgarities of man—the salt of the earth, lights in this darkness. We have known them, and to have known them helps to make life sweet. But I should care to say very little about the self-styled religious world. There are at least as many unreal professors now as in the days of Jesus, though the phylacteries which they broaden are not exactly of the same make or the same material; and I for one never feel so far from Christ and from Christianity, or from the Sermon on the Mount, as when I hear some of their utterances, or get an insight into their ways. Many, many, I fear, say, "Lord, Lord," before whom the very publicans and harlots shall, as Christ said, enter into the kingdom of Heaven. David said, in his haste, "All men are liars"; but Paul said, with deep

deliberateness, and we cannot contradict him—
 "All—all have sinned."

7. Is there, then, no hope? I will answer as the prophet Isaiah answered in the burden of Dumah: "He called to me out of Seir, Watchman, what of the night? Watchman, what of the night? The watchman said, The morning cometh—and also the night: if ye will inquire, inquire ye; return, come." Yes, there is a hope; but I will not dwell on it to-day; inquire of it for yourselves, in your Bibles and in your prayers. If ye will inquire, inquire ye. And if you will return here, come ye another day and I will try to answer you. But I want to leave deep in your own hearts to-day, that you may think, and inquire for yourselves, the dread lesson, on which alone the future hope can be founded, that all Jews as well as Gentiles, Christians as well as Jews—all—all have sinned.

Wild, wild wind, wilt thou never cease thy sighing?

Dark, dark night, wilt thou never wear away?

Cold, cold Church, in thy death sleep lying,

The Lent is past, the Passion here, but not thine

Easter Day.

So sings a Christian poet; but then he answers:

Peace, faint heart, though the night be dark and sighing;

Rest, fair corpse, where thy Lord Himself hath lain;

Weep, dear Lord, above Thy Church low lying;

Thy cross shall wake her frozen limbs to life and
 health again.

II.

"We have Sinned."

"Wretched man that I am." -Rom. vii. 24.



I have tried to realize the truth of St. Paul's assertion that all have sinned. It is not difficult to win assent to the general admission that "the world lieth in wickedness." It is easy to point to those glaring external features which mark but too clearly the hidden workings of evil. In proof of the prevalence of ungodliness, we may, alas! make irresistible appeal to society; to commerce; to the newspapers; to the mere daily spectacle of the streets; to the unworthy pettinesses, and bitter hatreds, and transparent conventionalities of the nominally Christian world. But from this general and indisputable truth I want to advance a step nearer home. I want you and myself to feel and know that we have done amiss; that very few of us have any right to claim that we are better than our brethren. If there be deep awful-

ness in the thought of a righteous God and a wicked world, we must not evaporate all its significance by regarding it from outside and at a distance, but we should also contemplate, with yet deeper humiliation, the thought that we are adding, and have added, to that universal guiltiness; that each one of us is a sinner, and that all things are naked and open to Him with whom we have to do. But here, too, I shall try to follow St. Paul's method. It were easy, if I thought it right, to lacerate the individual heart; to roll over each individual conscience the thunders of Sinai; to say to each, with pointed finger, Thou art the man. I do not wish to do this. I respect the sacredness of your individuality. I will thrust no human foot into the dread solitude where the soul is alone with God. I would not abuse the power of the pulpit to harden the defiant into brutality, or to drive the timid into despair. Rather would I reason with you in all humility, and gentleness; rather would I speak as a sinner to sinners, as a Christian to Christians, as a dying man to dying men.

2. The Epistle to the Romans is, as you know, the fullest statement of St. Paul's beliefs, but, like all his writings, it follows a peculiar order. The results are mingled with the reasonings; the proofs are anticipated by the statements; the main stream of the exposition is

broken by parentheses, digressions, and appeals. Hence the two passages which speak of the individual sinfulness of man do not immediately follow those which speak of his universal sinfulness. You will find those two passages in Rom. v. 12-20, and vii. 9-25. The first of these, if you will refer to them, is, as you will see, an historic retrospect; the second, a psychological study. In the fifth chapter he connects the sin of each individual with the fall of Adam, in the eighth he deduces it from a profound analysis of the human heart. He leaves each explanation side by side with the other, without attempting anywhere to point out the correlation between them.

3. Now, although I mean these few sermons to be of an expository character, I shall not enter minutely into the first of these two passages. Belonging as it does to the region of pure theology, it touches on that doctrine of original sin about which men have always differed, and which neither the theologians of the Council of Trent, nor the framers of our Thirty-nine Articles, were able exactly to define. But since St. Paul dwells on it but once, and since there have been scores of different interpretations of his meaning, we are sure that, apart from the general fact that man is a fallen being, the particular aspect under which we view the inherent, inherited fault and cor-

ruption of the nature of every man could not have been of cardinal importance in the setting forth of his Gospel. Thus much, however, is clear in it—namely, that St. Paul takes the universality of death as an adequate proof of the universality of sin; and that he contemplates a certain moral and mystic identity of Adam with his race, which appears on the part of God as judgment, and on the part of man as death. In Adam man sinned as man, and therefore mankind was placed in a sinful relation to God. Adam, then, after his fall, is, as it were, the personification of the evil tendency of the natural man, and Adam's sin, as the issue of that evil tendency, is the commencement of sin among all mankind. But further than this, St. Paul regards Adam and Christ as the representatives of two series of descendants and of consequences. In this chapter, as Reuss points out,* he contrasts them in five respects. (1) He compares them physically: Adam was of the earth, earthy; Christ was the Lord from heaven. (2) He compares them in their natural life: the nature of Adam was the animal nature which governs the unregenerate man; the nature of Christ was divine and spiritual. (3) He compares them morally: Adam and all his race are bound

* "La Théologie Paulinienne."

together in a solidarity of sin and condemnation ; Christ and His redeemed have passed from death to life. (4) He compares them in the effects which they produced : Adam's one sin was the starting-point of the condemnation of countless sins ; those countless sins, and their condemnation, constituted the necessity for Christ's one sacrifice, and Christ's free grace. (5) Lastly, he compares them in the breadth and intensity of the effects they wrought : though here the narrow hopelessness of man has struggled hard to set aside and explain away the glory of benediction, which he makes the chief point of his contrast. Human theologies have often seemed to exult in the conviction that the few alone are saved ; St. Paul's deepest conviction and avowed hope was that God's grace was stronger and more abundant than human sin. Adam's sin produced the universality of death : Christ's death wrought the far more glorious universality of a better and more enduring life.

4. But, passing from this historic starting-point of sin—which only becomes inexplicable and void of all practical bearing when it is entangled in the embroilment of systematic and exorbitant inference—St. Paul, in his eighth chapter, enters on a region which we shall more clearly understand. It is his study of the individual heart. In this passage he not only

wishes us to see that we all are sinners, but why we are so. The main point of that passage is that there are in the human heart two principles in hostility to each other—the one good, the other bad—the spirit and the flesh. The spirit is that part of our being which is the medium of communication between God and man; the source of every natural religious feeling; of reverence for the moral law; of our knowledge of God and of His will; of every desire and impulse within us to act in accordance with that will; of every element of life and character which makes man a little lower than the angels, and crowns him with glory and honour. The flesh is, in all things, the very opposite of this. It is the source of all concupiscence; of every unhallowed, of every ignoble, of every animal desire. From it springs every impulse to oppose the will, to disobey the law of God; in it is the root of sensuality, vice, hatred, drunkenness, falsehood, greed. Every life is, more or less, under the predominant sway of one of these two principles. If of the latter, then we are, in St. Paul's language, walking in the flesh, living after the flesh, minding the things of the flesh; if of the former, we are living after, and walking in, and minding the things of the Spirit. The wrong relation to God is remedied by God's gift in Baptism, that sign of regeneration whereby, as

our Article says, we are grafted into the Church; but the infection of nature, the inherited impulse, the evil bias, still remains; and to get the better of it is the very meaning of sanctification--the very work within us of the Holy Spirit of God.

5. They who are living in the Spirit are in the best and highest sense the saints of God. These are they in whom, even if the struggle be not over, yet the essential victory is won; they who can identify themselves absolutely with the best and highest parts of their own nature; they whom the angel holds by the hand and not the serpent by the heart; they in whom the ingrafted word has taken the place of the innate and unregenerate Adam. The love of God to man is beautifully manifested in the sunset, in the blue sky, in the morning and evening star; but nowhere is it mirrored with such winning loveliness as in a holy soul. The world could do without great heroes, even without great discoverers; it could not do without the saints of God. They are the salt of the earth; they are the kindled light on a golden candlestick; they are a city set upon a hill. They alone have proved to us that virtue is possible; that it is possible, by the grace of God, to reach the noblest of ideals. They have shown that life may be grand and happy and divine—

Till e'en the witless Gadarene,
 Preferring Christ to swine, can feel
 That life is sweetest when 'tis clean.
 And all the saints that hear their word
 Say, Lo ! the clouds begin to shine
 About the coming of the Lord.

It is on the lives of these alone that we can look with unmingled happiness ; in these alone can we see how Christians may be like their Lord ; these alone have visibly received that earnest of the Spirit which is the pledge of immortality beyond the grave.

6. But alas ! as these dear saints of God are the crown and flower of humanity, because in them the Spirit has triumphed, so are they in whom the flesh has wholly triumphed its deadliest discouragement, its most downtrodden mire. "How exquisite a thing is man," says the old philosopher, "when he is truly man" : but when man lives the sluggish, selfish, animal life—and when, in yet lower degradation, he has become an incarnation of the tiger in his cruelty, of the ape in his vileness—then for all his insolence he is lower than the very beasts that perish. A bad man, my brethren—if there be no such thing, are there not many perilously near it ? The brutal, ignorant sot, of the lower classes, who lives in hulking, loafing idleness, a life of shameless degradation ; who lets his children starve in disease and dirt, while he hangs about the public-house, and reels home

late at night to beat and kick his miserable wife :—this is one who once was, or might have been, a man till the drink, which England cherishes so much, and defends so persistently, transformed him into something viler than a beast. The man who lives in wealth by the fraud which shall ruin thousands of the innocent; the man who betrays the confidence of weakness, or corrupts the innocence of youth; the man who lives by preying on, or by pandering to, the worst weaknesses of his fellows; the man who is absorbed in the base selfishness of greed for gold: the man in the upper classes who, without God in the world, wastes his worthless career in alternations of frivolous inanity and guilty excitement; I turn from the saddening spectacle—these are bad men; these walk after the flesh. The world may flatter them; they may be successful; they may flourish, but "clouds they are, without water, carried along by winds; autumn trees, without fruit, twice dead, plucked up by the roots; wild waves of the sea, foaming out their own shame; wandering stars, for whom the blackness of darkness hath been reserved for ever."

7. But if, alas! the perfect saints of God are few; if but to have known one or two of them in a lifetime is a thing for which to thank God and take courage—so we may thank God

that downright bad men are also few. Weak men we have known ; men who have done, and who do, bad things ; small, miserable, contemptible natures ; men capable of little meannesses ; men who would whisper away a reputation out of mere jealousy ; men narrow and positive, intolerant and ignorant. All these we may see by scores in every variety of human pettiness and human wrong. But these are not wholly or necessarily bad men. These have, their better moments, their redeeming points — we do not shudder at them, as we do when we meet a nature radically perverted. Even fiction hardly ventures to picture an irredeemable depravity. The murderous usurper in “Hamlet,” villain as he is, is not so deaf to the voice of conscience as not to have his dark hour on his knees. The steely-hearted murderess in “Macbeth” cannot kill the old king because, as he lies sleeping there, he looks like her father. Even as in the very best natures there is yet a latent capacity, a slumbering potentiality of crime ; so there is, even perhaps in the vilest, some shrivelled fibre of nobleness ; a spark, lying somewhere under the dead white cinders ; in the desecrated and ruined temple some yet unvanishing gleam of light. Who shall say of any cheek, however hardened, that it shall never be dewed with the sinner’s repentant tears ? Look at Manasseh, setting up his abominations

in every grove, and passing his children through the fire to Moloch in the valley of Hinnon ; yet that is the same Manasseh who poured forth at last the repentant prayer. Look at Saul, madly persecuting the Christians and haling even women to prison, and looking on, unremorseful, when the light upon an angel countenance was quenched in blood ; yet that is Paul, the Apostle of the Gentiles, the servant of Jesus Christ. Look at John Bunyan, the drunken, blaspheming tinker of Bedford ; that is he who wrote the "Pilgrim's Progress from Earth to Heaven." Look at John Newton, the godless slave-driver, the coarse and cruel debauchee ; that is the friend of Cowper, the evangelic minister, faithful, and beloved. Look at George Whitefield, the vain and foolish tapster of a provincial inn, yet that is Whitefield whose word passed like a stream of fire thrilling into new life the valley of dry bones of England's Church.

8. The vast majority of men are neither true saints nor abandoned sinners. They stand between manhood in its divinest ennoblement and in its lowest degradation. They are not perfect Christians nor hopeless reprobates ; but their lives are sinful lives, because their lives are a constant struggle between the flesh and the spirit, in which the flesh too often wins the day. They feel in their lives a pain-

ful dualism, a disintegrated individuality; a jarring discord. There is raging within them a civil war; the to-and-fro-conflicting surge of a spiritual battle in which, though there be no clash of earthly weapons, the combatants are principalities and powers. Alas! there is no discharge in that war. Such souls seem to live two lives in one, loving the things they do not practise, and doing the things they cannot love. The very heathen have felt it. "I see and approve the better things," says Ovid; "I follow the worse." "Alas, alas!" says Euripides, "this is a deadly evil when men know the good, and will not aim at it." "It is evident," says Xenophon, "that there are two souls; when the good soul prevails, fair deeds are done; when the evil soul, wicked things." "Reason," says Seneca, "requires one thing; passion carries another." Yet none of all these great writers described this schism of our inward nature as did St. Paul. "For we know," he says, "that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. For that which I do, I know not; for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. . . . For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: but I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity under the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me out of the body of this death?"

9. Once when a great orator was describing these two principles in our nature—the flesh and the spirit—as two enemies fighting for the possession of our souls—"I know those two men!" exclaimed King Louis XIV., to whom the sermon was addressed. Ah! my brethren, do not you too know those two men—the old Adam and the Christ within you—striving for the same heart? Is there one among you all, who has never felt an hour of shame? who has never known the bitter reproach of a guilty conscience? who has never spoken words, never done deeds, never been haunted by thoughts, which no curtain of midnight would be too dark to hide, but yet which he knows to be naked and open before an eye ten thousand times brighter than the sun? Some of you, I doubt not—let me hope many—might say, "Such I was. That base, that mean, that unworthy, that self-indulgent person was myself; but I am different now; God has given me the victory, through Jesus Christ my Lord." But must there not also be very many who cannot say this; who face both ways; who are trying to serve God and mammon; who wish to be pardoned, and yet retain the offence; whose real self is not the hidden man of the heart, which after Christ Jesus is renewed in righteousness and true holiness, but the old man with his affections and lusts? When in the Temple, eighteen

centuries ago, the Lord merely said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her,"—lo! convicted by their own conscience, the people went out abashed, from the oldest even to the youngest, and left Mercy and Misery standing alone and face to face upon the Temple floor. Might not the same fate befall *us* if He asked that question here? Well, if you indeed feel that it is so, then you feel what I wished to bring home to your souls to-day. Not only "we all are sinners," but "I am a sinner." And he who feels *that*, with all humility, in all contrition; he who feels it, and says it, in tears and on his knees—he who, like the broken-hearted publican, scarce dares to lift so much as his eyes to heaven, but beats upon the breast and says, "God be merciful to me the sinner"—better may it be with him than with the Pharisee; he may go down to his house justified rather than the other. May it be so with us! For then on the dark cloud of our guilt, God will enable us to see the rainbow of His mercy; and from the awful truth that "we are sinners," he will lead us to repentance, and enable us to say and to feel in our own experience, "Blessed is the man whose iniquity is forgiven, whose sin is covered; blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth no sin, and in whose spirit there is no guile."

III.

The Forgiveness of Past Sins.

“Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith by His blood, to show His righteousness because of the passing over of the sins done aforetime, in the forbearance of God.” - ROM. iii. 25.



I have seen, so far, that this is a guilty world, and that all are guilty; and next that we are as others; we are guilty men; and from both sermons, that there is but one remedy for the sins of the world, but one remedy for *our* sins; it is the life, the death, the resurrection, the promised Spirit, the free redeeming grace of our Saviour Christ.

1. Now I trust that in some souls which God has touched, I may have been enabled to leave this impression that we cannot, and we need not, remain as we are. I am quite sure that if any one really and truly felt that he was a sinner—felt it, I mean, as the publican felt it when he stood in the Temple far off—felt it with pain and shame, with a healing contrition and a beneficent self-disgust; then he would

desire to escape, and to be delivered. There is indeed, as we have seen, a state of the soul which is aware of sin, but does not feel it; in which pain is over, because mortification has set in; in which struggle is paralysed, because stupefaction has begun. It is a condition of moral and spiritual death, which is deadlier than physical death, and far beyond the reach of salutary counsels. From that death God alone can awaken the self-slain soul. But I am sure that there are not many such hardened and wretchless sinners here. Gatherings there are, where the brows are crowned with flowers, and the wine flows fast and free, and he who sits there may know that the dead are there, and that the guests are in the depths of hell; but surely there can be no such reign of moral death in the House of God. We are sinners indeed; to us belongeth shame and confusion of face; but our very worship, our prayers, our hymns, our bowed heads, our Eucharists; do they not show that we desire to resist our sins: to grow ever better and better; to draw nigh to God? And if, with our whole hearts, we do, at our better moments, desire this, and yet are not walking in the spirit but in the flesh, then I am very sure that we feel our moral condition to be a bitter and weary one. And may we ever continue to feel it so, and to feel it more and more, until we find recon-

ciliation, and deliverance, and 'peace' with God !

2. Let us try to realize why the condition of a sinner, who is ashamed of his sins but has not yet forsaken them, nor brought forth as yet the fruits of repentance, must be a condition bitter and dolorous. Test every word I say by your own innermost experience, and tell me if your own consciences do not bear witness to my words ? Is it not bitter, first, because it is a condition of struggle ; an incessant interchange between flashes of nobleness and darkness of shame ; a moral see-saw between "I ought," and "I cannot ;" "I ought not," and "I do." We are told that in our civil wars the good Lord Falkland ever went about murmuring "peace, peace," and died at last of a broken heart, nor was it till he died that he found peace. But the wilful sinner has a perpetual civil war within : no peace, no rest, no pause, and little hope or none, nor will even death bring him peace by any means. It is a weary, weary conflict. This week is like the last week ; this month like the last month ; this year like the last year ; youth like boyhood, manhood like youth—only a little harder, and little worse ; the divergence from right, which was small at first, growing ever wider and wider ; the infection of nature like a cancer within us, striking deeper and ever

deeper fangs; the weakness of our character becoming ever more and more confirmed; a life of endless defeats, till struggle itself seems useless, sinking into lower and ever lower demoralization, and into deeper and ever deeper despair. Tell me, my friends, if this life of sin be not a life of the mist, in which nothing is bright and beautiful, but all is dim and grey; in which all things are but seen in ghastly phantasmagoria and lurid distortion; a life in which even after the rain, the clouds return; in which the twilight ever deepens into the evening, and the evening into the black dark night. And how does it end -- this life of sin? It ends sometimes in God's suffering a man to fall into some great and fearful sin, which the sinner thought that he never could have committed, which, like the sudden burst of red-hot lava down the vine-clad slopes of a volcano, scorches and blights, and devastates all the decent proprieties and smooth conventions of his life. Sometimes, again, it ends in suicide, when the guilty heart is broken with weariness, or starts back in horror from the unnatural glare which some retributive act of iniquity has flung over its self-deceit; and sometimes, again, it ends in the frost and lethargy of spiritual death, when men become utterly alienated from God and from all good; deaf to conscience, paralysed to effort, dead in trespasses and sins.

3. St. Paul uses two words in describing this condition. He calls it a curse; "Christ," he says, "has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us." And he calls it "the wrath of God"; for "the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men." It is a curse because a man feels that he is in a state which violates the first and most necessary law of his being. It makes him a friend and ally of all that is base and vile; an enemy to all that is real and eternal. He knows and feels that there is and can be no happiness except in fulfilling the law of God; in being on the side of God; in living at peace with God; and all this he is not. He knows and feels that there can be nothing but defeat and shame in being on the side and in the service of Satan, and of all that is wicked and revolting; and that he is. And naturally this feeling reveals itself to him as the wrath of God. It is an anthropomorphic phrase—*i.e.*, a phrase which applies to the Infinite the language of the finite, to God the language of man. It does not mean that God has in any way changed His mercy, but that the man has changed his capacity for mercy. Our language about God is like the phrases we use about the sun. We say "the sun got hot"—as though the glory of heaven gathered radiance and intensity when it is but

we who wheel our little meridian towards him. Or we say that the sun is dim and red to-day, The sun is never red or dim: no change takes place in its awful orb of unemptiable fire, but to us it is dim and red, because between us and it hangs the lurid curtain of cloud and fog which rises from the cities and seas of earth. Even so God is ever God, and therefore is ever love; a sun which burns in the meridian for ever. But, because between us and Him the vapours have thickened which reek upwards from the marshes and miry places of corrupted hearts, our sense of His presence is changed into lurid dimness or crimson flame. The anger of God means God's law of retributive justice; it means God's changeless holiness in relation to human sin. But for this very reason the sinner must be wretched, because he has put in action against himself this mighty automatic engine of self-avenging justice; because he feels his own offensiveness to this awful holiness; and because no man can be happy, who, being at discord with God, is at discord with all within himself which is not corruptible and vain.

4. If you will try to analyse this condition of sinful misery, you will find in it three elements—the elements of guilt, of weakness, and of fear. If all have sinned, if we have sinned, it is well that we should thoroughly see and understand the wretchedness of sin, that

we may be led to see and to grasp the deliverance wrought for us by the blood of Christ.

i. First, then, there is the element of guilt. It rises chiefly from a retrospect of the past. It is the sense of wrong-doing unredeemed. Have any of you ever had a debt hanging over you—a debt which must be paid—which you cannot pay, which ought never to have been contracted; which may at any time be demanded? A young man, perhaps flushed with wine, has betted heavily as to whether one horse which he never saw can run faster than another horse which he never saw; or gambled heavily on the chance whether one card is higher than another card. And in this idiotic way—for there is no senselessness too abysmal for human folly to court therewith the elements of ruin—he has lost ruinously, as in the long run gamblers and dicers always do. At any moment the fabric of his fortunes may be shattered; his goods sold; his little boys and girls reduced to beggary. What is the state of that man's mind? Does he not curse his folly the last thing before he sinks to his restless sleep at night? does it not recur in aching dulness with the first conscious thought of his miserable awaking? Or take a yet nearer analogy. A man has done something wrong: he has broken not only God's law, about which many are terribly indifferent, but man's law too; he has

forged a letter, or a cheque ; he has had his share in a fraud ; he has done some shameful or dishonourable thing. He may be safe (he thinks) from discovery ; he may know that detection is not as yet at any rate, at his heels ; he may not fear lest men, as they walk behind him, should

Amid the honest shoulders of the crowd
Read rascal in the motions of his back,
And scoundrel in the supple sliding knee.

And yet how does that man feel ? Does he not know his own guilt ? Do not his conscience and his memory write bitter things against him ? Is not his past a shame and misery to him ? Can wealth, can luxury, can pleasure, can excitement make him happy ? Ah, my brethren, it is hardly probable that any of us have sinned in this way ; but have we not all sinned in some way, no less grievous, before God ? As we contemplate the past, do we not see it defiled with sins, and do not these sins burden us with the sense of guilt ?

ii. And when we turn our eyes from the past to the present, is not the sense of past guilt aggravated by the sense of present weakness ? We have not only incurred that debt, we are increasing it. We have not only done that wrong, we are adding to it. I will not dwell on this now, because we may have to dwell on it more fully hereafter. But I ask

every sinner here: Is not the sorrow of his wrong-doing deeply aggravated in the present by the sense of weakness? by the dread mis-giving that he will never be able to free himself from the fetters which he carelessly put on;—that the robe of sin he wove to be the festal garment of his youth, will become the winding-sheet of his happiness and the clinging cerecloth of his grave?

iii. And then, is there not, as regards the future, the gloom and shadow of fear? My brethren, it is almost terrible to contemplate the effects of human fear. There is a well-known picture of a modern artist, in which a forger is being arrested by detectives as he steps into the train; the horror and anguish on the man's face are appalling, and the painter has been charged with exaggeration in thus delineating his horrified and ghastly pallor. But the artist told me that they who had most often taken part in such scenes, said that his picture was entirely true to fact. The world, in all ages, has been full of stories of haunted men; men with footsteps behind them; men so terrified by guilt, that the sound of a shaken leaf has unhinged their nerves. Plutarch tells us of a youth, who was seen fiercely tearing some young birds out of their nest and trampling on them; and when rebuked for it, said, "It served them right. Why did they keep

twittering 'parricide, parricide'?"* Only a few years ago, a fraudulent speculator was startled into a betrayal of his circumstances by the sudden visit of some gentlemen, who so far from coming to inquire about the rotten investment into which he had seduced them—as his guilty conscience instantly suggested to him—came, on the contrary, to ask him to stand for Parliament. Is there one here who is conscious of some heinous crime? How is it with him? Does he not feel as if the earth were made of glass? Does he not feel as though Heaven were looking down upon him with an eye in every star? Does not a sudden hand upon the shoulder shake his pulses? Does not a sudden knock at the door drive the colour from his cheek? What he dreads mainly is the horror of earthly consequences, and earthly consequences may be escaped—sometimes—though not perhaps often; but does not the sinner well know that the consequences of impenitent misdoing shall not be escaped in yonder world where all is judged of truly?

In the corrupted currents of this world
 Offence's gilded hand may shove by justice,
 And oft 'tis seen the wicked prize itself
 Buys out the law. But 'tis not so above,
 There is no shuffling; there the action lies
 In its true nature; and we ourselves compelled
 Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults
 To give in evidence.

* "De Sera Numinis Vindicta."

My friends, let none of you be misled, by the idle and unworthy carelessness of current controversy, into supposing that I have ever denied that which, on the contrary, I have always most solemnly maintained, that there is an awful future, as there is an awful present, for unrepented sin. I believe that there is a punishment beyond the grave as there is a punishment here; and that, for every sinner who dies wilfully impenitent, the loss, if not even the anguish, may be immeasurable and will continue until he change, if he ever change. All that I have ventured to hope is that haply the sinner may suffer God's mercy to reach him there, which far more easily, and with far more eternal blessedness, he might have suffered to find him here. For without repentance there is no conversion; without conversion no holiness; without holiness no man shall see the Lord.

5. Have we not, then, advanced with St. Paul one step further in our inquiry? All are guilty: we are guilty: and 'to be guilty ever has been, since the world began, to be miserable, and ever will be until it end. We are called to be saints; yet we are sinners, not saints. Christ said, "Be ye perfect"; and we are not perfect, but fearfully imperfect. We are far away, though the Spirit and the Bride say "Come." We have read the poet's "Vision of Sin"—

At last I heard a voice upon the slope
Cry to the summit, "Is there any hope?"
To which an answer pealed from that far land,
But in a tongue no man could understand,
And on the glimmering limit far withdrawn
God made Himself an awful rose of dawn.

"In a tongue no man can understand." Ay, so it may be, and yet it speaks to us an intelligible language. In what sense have we accepted the Gospel of Christ, if we do not know that, for this triple bondage of the past, the present, and the future which I have described—this triple bondage of guilt, weakness, fear—there is a triple deliverance? The message of that deliverance—the message of forgiveness, strength, hope—is in all its length, and breadth, and fulness; in all its height, and depth, and plenitude; in all its riches, and grace, and glory—the message of the Gospel. It is the deliverance which, step by step, I shall strive to unfold. The very central truth of it is that "Faithful is the saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief." There is not one of you all here; not one youth in the choir, not one old man in the congregation; not one of the rich, not one of the poorest; not one of the distinguished, not one of the obscure; to whom there may not be, at this very moment, full and free forgiveness now and for evermore; to whom happiness

here and happiness hereafter is not freely offered. To every one of you all, if only you be sincerely penitent, there need be no obstruction from the guilt, or from the memories of the past. To every one of you all, who truly repents him of his sins past, it is the blessedness of our authorized commission to declare, "Thy sins be forgiven thee." To every one of you all we may proclaim that, if you will accept the free grace of God's promised forgiveness in Jesus Christ our Lord, then "is there not rain enough in the sweet heavens to wash you white as snow"? Yea, the three first Gospels tell us in the same words that "The Son of Man hath power on earth to forgive sins." That is at least one fragment - one, yet an inestimably precious fragment --- of the meaning of this passage, which is perhaps the most pregnant passage ever written, and which contains in it the whole Gospel of God: "For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus."

IV

Christ a Ransom and a Propitiation.

"Being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus ; whom God set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood,"—ROM. iii. 24, 25.

WE have seen that all have sinned ; that we have sinned ; that there is a forgiveness of sins. We are guilty men, bound in the triple bondage of guilt in the past, of weakness in the present, of dread for the future. But we have realized that from the bondage of past guilt God is ever willing to set us free. The step further which I now want you to take is that it is through Christ alone that we can gain this freedom ; that it is He, who by His life, and by His death, by His Incarnation and Sacrifice, by His Resurrection and Ascension, has wrought for us the possibility of our salvation. I want you to feel with me what we mean when we say that He is the full, perfect, and sufficient sacrifice, oblation, and satisfaction for our sins, and the sins of all the world.

1. Now in this great verse, which it would take many sermons to exhaust, the work of Christ is set forth under two words--each involving an image and a metaphor--redemption and propitiation. Let us try thoroughly to understand both words.

2. The word redemption, or ransom, is easily understood; it means the buying back, the paying something for another. When a man had incurred a debt, and, in accordance with ancient law, had been imprisoned or sold as a slave in consequence of that debt, the payment of the debt by another constituted his redemption from slavery, his ransom from bondage. All mankind was in that condition before God, and we are in that condition; burdened with the ten thousand talents of debt which we cannot pay; in bondage to sin and Satan; sold under sin, tied and bound with the chain of our sins; our very lives justly forfeited to the majesty of violated law. And from this condition Christ delivered us. As far as the effects to us are concerned, we might say that He purchased us from this slavery; that He bought us by the price of His life and death; redeemed us with His precious blood. And the figure chiefly used is not that He pays the debt, but that He cancels it; forgives it, freely and unpaid; blots it out, tears it up, nails its no longer valid fragments to His cross. The

transcendent, the divine side of this—the reason as regards God why such an expiation, such a price for our ransom was necessary—neither Scripture teaches us, nor conscience, nor any voice of God. It is as high as heaven; what can we know? But we can know, we do know, the blessed effects to us. They are that our debt is annulled, our prison broken, our lives redeemed. They are that by faith in Christ, by union with Christ, we may have life, and light, and liberty. They are that we are quickened, that we are forgiven, that we are free. The temporal consequences of our sins we still must bear; from the eternal consequences, and, what is still better, from the sins themselves, from the state of sin, from the guilt, we may by God's mercy be for ever free.

3. This, then, is the meaning of the first word and metaphor, *apolutrosis*, redemption. Let us now look at the second word, "Whom God set forth to be a propitiation through faith in His blood," or (as it may mean) a propitiation by His blood, by means of faith. This word propitiation expresses the same truths as the other, but under a different and very striking metaphor. The Greek word for it is *hilasterion*.* The exact translation of the word is uncertain. It may mean a sin offering; it may mean "a

* The word in 1 John ii. 2, iv. 10, is different—*ἱλασμός*, which the LXX. use to render *Kippurim* ("atonement").

propitiation"—*i.e.*, an act to make another propitious or favourable; and it may mean (and it is on this that I would concentrate your attention) what is called in our English Bible "the mercy-seat." And this is almost certainly the true meaning here. The only other passage in the New Testament, in which it occurs, is Heb. ix. 5, "over it the cherubim of glory, shadowing the *ἱλαστήριον*—the mercy-seat." I will not enter into the question which is the best rendering further than to say that in the whole Greek Bible, wherever the word occurs, it means mercy-seat. It has the same meaning also in the Jewish writer Philo, who was a contemporary of St. Paul, and it is so understood by most of the Fathers.* It is almost impossible to suppose that any Jew to whom St. Paul was writing could have heard the word without the notion of the "mercy-seat" occurring at once and very prominently to his mind.

4. But what was the mercy-seat? And can it be said in any intelligible sense that God set forth Christ as a "mercy-seat?" Let me ask you—for I think it will be worth your while—to grasp as a firm possession the meaning of this word.

The "mercy-seat" is not a very happy rendering of the Hebrew word *kapporeth*

* Philo calls the Kapporeth "a symbol of the compassionate power of God." See note on p. 273.

("covering"),* which was not a seat at all, but means the lid upon, or perhaps the canopy over, the Ark of God in the Tabernacle of Moses. It may have been so called at first because it covered the Ark; but very soon the Jews connected it with the "covering" of their sins by the ceremonies of the great day of Atonement. Hence the old rendering of "the expiatory;"—"the propitiatory," would perhaps have been better. St. Paul clearly regarded it as a type of Christ. What, then, was it? And what was the use of it? What is meant by God setting forth Christ as "the propitiatory," or "the covering"?

5. You know that when Moses was bidden to place in the Holy of Holies the golden Ark which enshrined the stone tables of the Law of God, he was bidden to place over it a *kaphoreth* or "covering" of solid gold, on which were two cherubim of solid gold, which overshadowed it with golden wings. They were an emblem of creation in its highest intelligence, desiring to gaze with downward adoration into the Law of God of which the two broken tablets were contained in the Ark. Between their outspread wings the Shechinah or cloud of glory was supposed to dwell; and this was a vivid emblem that the very throne of God was based on

* τὸ ἐπιθεμα.—Jos., "Antt." iii. 6, § 5. Comp. Philo, "De Vit. Mos.," iii p. 688.

the law of eternal righteousness. Now into the awful unbroken darkness of this Holy of Holies entered the High Priest, alone, once a year, on the great day of atonement or "covering." If you will study the ritual of that day, as detailed in Levit. xvi., you will find it deeply instructive. To represent the humiliation of sinful souls, it was the only fast in all the Jewish year. Bathed, and clothed in fine linen, white and clean, the High Priest at dawn selected a bullock and a ram, as a sin and burnt offering for himself and his house ; and two goats--and for a burnt offering a ram—for the sins of the people. With the bullock he made atonement for himself and his house. He then cast lots on the two goats, of which one was to be for Jehovah, the other (as you will see in the margin of your Bibles) for Azazel. The one on which the lot for Jehovah fell was to be offered for the people's sin ; the one on which the lot for Azazel fell was to be let loose. He then offered the bullock in sacrifice. Next, he took in one hand a golden censer, full of burning coals, from the kindled altar of his sacrifice, and in the other hand a handful of sweet incense beaten small. Then, bending under the blue embroidered vail he entered the inmost shrine, and upon the red glow of the burning coals which illuminated its glimmering darkness he scattered the rich perfume. Once more he entered with a

bowl containing the blood of the bullock, which he sprinkled seven times upon and before the mercy-seat. Then he killed the goat of the sin offering for the people, and entering with its blood, sprinkled that also seven times upon the mercy-seat, and made an atonement for the holy place because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins. Then after similarly making an atonement for the altar he came forth, and over the head of the live goat confessed all the iniquities of the children of Israel, and all their transgressions in all their sins, putting them upon the head of the goat, which was then sent away into the wilderness, into "a land not inhabited." After which the High Priest bathed once more, and putting on his golden robes of holiness and beauty, splendid in crimson and purple and broidery, with the golden bells and pomegranates upon his garments' fringe, came forth once more, and offered the two rams as burnt offerings; and the sons of Aaron shouted and sounded the silver trumpets, and the people fell down to the earth upon their faces, and the singers sang, and the High Priest lifted up his hands to bless the whole congregation of the children of Israel, and to bid them rejoice in the name of the Lord.

6. Into the beautiful symbolism of the scapegoat, and the meaning of the term "for

Azazel," I will not enter, but I think you will see why it is here said that God set forth Christ as the "propitiatory" or "mercy-seat." Fix your minds on that scene, and that symbol. In the darkness which symbolized the clouds and darkness which are round about Him, was the Presence of the Awful God, between the bowed heads and spreading wings of the Cherubim. Underneath Him were the shattered granite tables of the fiery Law, to show that righteousness and judgment are the habitation of His seat. Before Him, as though before His very throne, with all the glittering faces of His angels looking upon him, stood a guilty man. But what was there between sin and holiness, between God and that guilty man, between misery and justice? First, there was a cloud of sweet and sacred incense, the type of prayer, rising in fragrant fumes from the glowing golden censer; and the guilty man was clad in fine white linen—robes of innocence (Lev. xvi. 4, 32); and he was fasting, to show humble contrition; and he had in his hands the blood of the offered sacrifice. And between the Tables of the Law and God was the golden *kapporeth*—"the covering," "the propitiatorie"—its gold bedimmed, crimsoned, encrusted with the blood of many a sacrifice. And outside was the living goat, waiting to have the sins of Israel confessed upon its head, to carry them

away—away from Israel, away from man, to a place not inhabited, for Azazel in the wilderness. Could there, then, be a more speaking symbol of Christ ; of Christ in the suffering flesh ; of Christ in his sorrow-stained yet mediatorial humanity, than that blood-stained angel-shadowed gold ? Could there be a more solemn and glorious symbol of man before God, than that High Priest ?—he was a man guilty, yet redeemed ; guilty, but the atoning blood in his hands ; guilty, but with the cloud of holy prayer uprising for him as incense ; guilty, but with his sins confessed, forgiven, taken far away ; guilty, yet clad in robes of innocence : guilty before the awful Law, before the awful God, yet able to lift up his eyes in certainty of acceptance, in full assurance of forgiveness, to the covering, of pure gold besprinkled with atoning blood, which made his forfeit life secure, and enabled him to go forth, his guilt forgiven, rejoicing, to the rejoicing people “as the morning star in the midst of a cloud, and as the moon at full, as the sun shining upon the temple of the Most High, and as the rainbow shining in bright clouds.”

7. Here, then, are St. Paul's two metaphors—comforting us (as do all other forms of speech in which is taught the forgiveness of sins) with one and the same great truth, that since it was the will of God that all men should be saved, He, of His

free love and grace, made possible for us and threw open to us that great salvation. Can we not be content with this? Must human theology here step in with her reasonings, and her inferences, and her systems, and her philosophies, often perverting the simplicity of the Gospel, often violating the consciences of men? Must we ask how was it that Christ's death procured our salvation? Must we ask to whom it was that the price of our redemption was paid? Human theology asks these questions, and flounders hopelessly in the answer. If a man valued a cheap reputation for learning--if he wanted to win the poor praise for a knowledge of systematic theology--do you think that it would not be easy for him to tell you what Duns Scotus thought on this subject, and what Thomas Aquinas thought; to argue with the Thomists that the blood of Christ was a superabundant, or with the Scotists that it was a gratuitous, satisfaction? He might tell you how for a thousand years, from St. Irenæus to Peter Lombard men taught the almost grotesque and revolting doctrine, now happily exploded, that the ransom of Christ's life had been paid to the devil; and how St. Anselm invented the juridical, and how Calvin invented the forensic, view of the Atonement. Anselm dreamed of a sort of legal compact between justice and mercy, in which Christ as God-

man paid the debt which man must pay, and which yet none but God could pay; and Calvin worked out a theory of vicarious substitution, in which the Father's wrath was tempered by the Son's sacrifice--by which justice, ceasing to be justice, by smiting the innocent unjustly, excused itself for not smiting the guilty. Yes, certainly, were it well to do so, I could detail to you, in theological terms, many legal fictions of human invention, built on the erroneous intrusion of human logic into the sphere of divine infinitude. He who lists may soar with great "theologians" into the secrets of the Deity on the waxen wings of the understanding; he may endeavour to scale heaven with the upheaped Pelion upon Ossa of perverted metaphor; he may bedim the air with the wide-spreading fumes of inference from the narrow aperture of single texts. But I never will. It is not that I have no acquaintance with this sort of theology, but that it has no attractions for me. There is a theology which stands like an angel in adoration, vailing its wings before the throne of God; and of that theology I would be a student and a scholar. There is a theology which darkens counsel by the multitude of words without knowledge; which puts a stumbling-block in the path of Christ's simple children; which intrudes into things which it has not seen, vainly puffed up in its fleshly mind. That theology I

do not love. Thank God these errors and confusions do not rob men of His free grace. Great and holy were Irenæus and Origen, who held the first theory—that God paid our ransom to the devil; great and holy was the brave St. Anselm of Canterbury; great and holy was John Calvin. But we sit not at the feet of these, but at the feet of Christ and of His Apostles. And there, as against a thousand years of theology, I hear not one syllable of a ransom paid to Satan; and there, as against St. Anselm, I find that God is not made up of conflicting and contending attributes, but that His love is all justice, and His justice is all love; and there, as against Calvin, I find that instead of Christ, as the unconscious blasphemy of a modern hymn expresses it, “smoothing the Father’s angry brow,” there was but one will in God who saved us, so that love and justice were in harmony, and righteousness and peace kissed each other, both in the Father and in the Son. What, then, is the fundamental mistake of all these theologians? How is it that they only becloud that true and real theology which is the knowledge of God? It is because they argue from real effects to imaginary antecedents; from the blessed consequences of the divine actions to those causes of them which are mysteries passing all understanding; from metaphors which are only valid, and only meant to be valid, as regards

man, as though they were also valid and comprehensible as regards the inmost counsels of God.

My friends, we may safely sweep all this vaunted and vaunting human philosophy of the plan of salvation away. Let us have nothing to do with fancies of legal contracts; of forensic arrangements; of juridical compromises; of vicarious satisfaction; of blind wrath, exhausting itself on innocence; of justice at war with mercy; of a merciful Son and an angry Father. There are always two handles to every subject--one by which it may, one by which it may not, be taken. This is the handle by which emphatically this subject of Christ's propitiation may not be taken. The "why" and the "how" and the "to whom" have done endless mischief. They are vain, unanswerable questions, which have no bearing at all on that faith which worketh by love. All that we can know, or need to know, is that we are redeemed by the precious blood of Christ; all we can or need to know is that Christ is our mercy-seat, and that by Him we may approach, without fear, to a loving, forgiving God. Let us be content with this plain language of Scripture--that we have "redemption through His blood, even forgiveness of sins"; that "as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive." The only lesson of any value which theology can teach us is that of my text, that we

are "justified freely by His grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation, through faith, by His blood."

I cannot understand the woe
That Thou wast pleased to bear ;
O dying Lamb, I do but know
That all my hopes are there.

NOTE ON *ἱλαστήριον*.—The Greek translators use this word almost invariably for the Kapporeth, and if in Ezek. xliii. 14, 17, 20, it is used for "settle" of the altar, it is because that also has to be sprinkled with blood. In 1 Chron. xxviii. 11, the Holiest Place is called "*the house of the mercy seat*," and this is rendered in the LXX. *οἶκος τοῦ ἱλασμοῦ*. See Lev. xvi. 14-15, xvii. 11. In Exod. xxx. 22, Lev. xvi. 2, the Kapporeth is "the central seat of the saving presence and gracious revelation of God."

The Law cannot give Life.

“If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have been of the law.” GAL. iii. 21.

AS regards the first stage of our deliverance—the truth that we not only may be, but that we have been, delivered, from the guilt of the past, if we come by faith to the Deliverer—I do not think that we shall feel much difficulty. God is very good to us. He is so good to us that we are but too swift to believe His readiness to forgive—sometimes, alas! without even troubling ourselves about the inevitable conditions of all forgiveness. “Oh, what a favour is this to me,” said Christian, when the wicket gate was opened to him, “that I should be suffered to enter here.” “We make no objections against any,” answered Goodwill, “notwithstanding all that they have done before they came hither. They are in nowise cast out; and therefore, good Christian, come with me, and I will teach thee about the way thou must go. Look before thee. Dost thou see this narrow way?

That is the way thou must go." And he pointed him a way from which many others turned, which were crooked and wide, but this way was always strait and narrow. Then Christian asked to be helped off with the burden of his sins—the heavy burden on his back; and was told that, at the place of deliverance, it would fall off of itself. So burdened Christian ran up the narrow way, which was fenced in with the wall of Salvation, till he came to a low hill—and on it a cross, and under it a sepulchre; and there his burden loosed from off his shoulders, and fell from off his back, and began to tumble till it fell into the sepulchre. "Then was Christian glad and light-some, and began to look and look upon that cross, even until the springs that were in his head sent the waters down his cheeks. But as he stood, looking and weeping, behold three shining ones came to him and saluted him with 'Peace be to thee.' So the first said, 'Thy sins be forgiven thee'; the second stripped him of his rags and clothed him with change of raiment; the third set a seal upon his forehead, and gave him a roll, into which he bade him look as he ran, and to give it in at the celestial gate." It is a beautiful allegory of the forgiveness of sins.

2. But, my brethren, the real difficulty of life only begins there. Good Christian had many a fall and many a conflict before him. He had to slumber on the hill Difficulty; to face the

two lions on the narrow path ; to be cursed and insulted in Vanity Fair ; to lie in fetters in Doubting Castle ; to fight the foul fiend Apollyon in the Valley of the Shadow of Death. Forgiveness in the past is not enough, as you all will feel, without strength in the present. I can imagine a young man, convinced of the love of God--convinced that God is ready to blot out the handwriting which is against him--convinced that, if he repent, God is more than ready to let him start fair again. But how hard to repent in very truth ; to bring forth the fruits of repentance in a changed life ; to be not only pardoned, but also holy and pure ; to break evil habit, to conquer incessant temptation ! For a time--in the first flush of Christian enthusiasm, as he begins to buckle on the untried Christian armour, as the war-cry of his captain rings loud upon his ear--at first the young Christian fancies himself irresistible. He looks to no strength but his own. He scorns watchfulness. He neglects prayer. He dallies on the very verge of evil habit ; he unlaces the helm ; lays by the sword ; releases his arm from the burden of the shield ; parleys with the enemy ; slumbers at his post. What wonder that thus he is doomed to feel the weight of the wounding fetter, and the anguish of the fiery dart ? Old voices call him ; old habits begin to weave round his unnerved hands their invisible filaments ; old desires work secretly within him

and relax the muscles of his resolve; old passions start clamorously from their whited sepulchres; old familiar spirits come back to their former habitation, exultant to find it empty, ready for them, unoccupied by good. Alas! how many a Byends, how many a Timorous, how many a Hypocrite, has found that a half-repentance means only a more terrible relapse! We cannot take to ourselves the blessed words, "Neither do I condemn thee," unless we take also to ourselves the high message, "Go, and sin no more."

3. From these sad perils, from these humiliating failures, there is but one way of deliverance. Christ said, "I am the way." St. Paul called it "justification by faith"; and, as we shall see hereafter, "justification by faith" means ultimately this—holiness, self-sacrifice, a new relationship to God, brought about by mystic union of the soul with Christ. But this is exactly what the heart of the unregenerate will not accept. To them, as to the Jews of old, the doctrine of the Cross is a stumbling-block; as to the Greeks of old, it is foolishness. They will call it superstition; they will call it fanaticism; they will call it enthusiasm; they will climb into God's fold by some other way.

4. What, for instance, is the code by which men of the world profess to guide themselves? What do they hold up as their ideal? What do

they set up before their sons? Is it the holiness of Christ? Is it the self-denial of the Cross? Is it not the code of honour?

Is the code of honour sufficient? Let the facts of the world, let the condition of society, in various countries, in various ages, answer. The code of honour is supposed to rule the ideal of the gentleman; and the word "honour" and the word "gentleman" are capable of very beautiful and noble meanings. But test them. See how dreadfully they have been misapplied. See on what narrow heads and on what corrupted hearts the name "gentleman" has been bestowed. What used to be meant by that which was expressly called "an affair of honour?" An "affair of honour" was, as you know, nothing more nor less than a duel; the revenge of fury and folly; a thing as unlike any law of Christ as it is possible to conceive; "a fashionable mixture of murder and suicide." And what becomes of honour in the phrase "debts of honour"? They were nothing more nor less than debts incurred by the intolerable follies of betting, or dicing, or gambling; debts in their very nature essentially dishonourable; yet debts which it was more dishonourable forsooth for a man of honour not to pay than it was to bring his wife and children to hopeless beggary, and to ruin the honest tradesmen who had supplied him with their goods! Such honour

is but gilded dust, and of those who trust to it we can only say that it often is the stronghold of sin—

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true.

The Gospel of Christ is clear ; the law of honour is not clear. The laws of Sinai are complete, but the deadliest sins were omitted utterly from this false fantastic Decalogue of honour. And how idle it was to think that honour could fill the place of God ! Let none of you think that you can shape your course by any such compass. How little it can hold its own in the face of great interests, great trials, or great passions—how utterly and irremediably it has broken down before them—how, when used to bind the arms of a strong temptation, it shrivels like flax before the flame—let hundreds of biographies of men who meant well, but who have given way in a moment, testify.

Let the poet describe for us such a case :

Giles, then, the soul of honour—there he stand's
Frank as, ten years ago, when knighted first :
What honest men should dare (he said) he durst.
Good ; but the scene shifts—-laugh ! what hangman's
hands
Put to his breast a parchment ? his own bands
Read it. Poor traitor, spit upon, and curst !

Yes, my brethren, I will tell you what the law of honour—what any mere worldly rule of con-

duct is. Without morality, without religion, without God, it is but a thread of which every strand is weak. Try to cling to such a thread as this, and you will find that it only hangs over a gloomy ocean of bitterness, into which you will fall, and battle with despair, like a wrecked vessel upon a midnight sea.

5. But perhaps you will say—and, so far, more wisely—as you set your faces hillwards for the steep strait path: “We will not take human rules for our guide, we will take the law of God. We will not take honour, but integrity. Whatever is wrong, we know that God’s moral law is right. We know that it will tell us what we ought to do, and *all* that we ought to do. We will summon to our aid our own manly resolution—on reason we will build resolve, ‘that pillar of true majesty in man.’ We will not say ‘I might,’ or ‘I would;’ but we will say, as a man should say, ‘I am’ ‘I ought,’ ‘I can,’ ‘I will.’ We don’t want mysticism, or theory, or priestcraft, or enthusiasm to aid us; we do not care much to understand what you say about Christ, or the cross of Christ, or union with Christ, or faith, or justification, or theology. We know what we ought to do; we know what we ought not to do; we will do the one, we will eschew the other. We do not pretend to be religious, but we are and will be moral and virtuous.”

Ah! "that tune goes manly," no doubt, but if you try to please God in reliance on your own strength, you are doomed to humiliating failure. Most men, when they start, mean to be moral, mean to be virtuous. Adam never meant to eat the forbidden fruit; he knew that it was wrong, criminally fatal to do so. Samson never meant to sink into the weak degraded fool he showed himself to be. Achan never meant to steal that Babylonish garment. Saul never meant to degenerate into a jealous, envious, savage demoniac. David never meant to stain his life with the deadly crimson stains of adultery and murder. Joash never meant to repay his debt to Jehoiada by the slaying of his son. The Prodigal never meant to become a hungry feeder of filthy swine. Judas never meant to be the seller of his Lord. The drunkard never meant to be a drunkard; nor the mammon worshipper a cheat; nor the sensualist a degraded and ruined slave. But temptation is strong; the heart is treacherous; the flesh is weak; Satan active; our own nature frail. The world's whole experience may be summed up in the confession that "we are not sufficient of ourselves to account anything as from ourselves"; and the Christian's, in the glad acknowledgment that "our sufficiency is from God."

Be sure, my friends, that there is one

way to be holy and one way alone, and that if you seek any other you will fail. In how many myriads of instances have youths repudiated with abhorrence that which nevertheless has been their future self? "Is thy servant a dog that he should do this thing?" said Hazael, when told that he should murder his master;* but for all that, when his master lay weak and ill, the wretch that he grew to be stole on tiptoe to his bedside, and took the thick wet cloth, and laid it on his lips and suffocated him. Many a boy would have started back appalled and horrified if, in his bright early years, before thoughtlessness has become vice, and vice sin, and sin crime, and crime wretchlessness -- many a boy, I say, would have sunk into the very earth with shame and horror, if any one could, as in a mirror, have shown him what would be the issues of his character and the end of his career. With what emphasis of indignation would he then have refused to acknowledge his future self! Yet in his present self lay the germs of that ultimate development.

You ask why this is. I will tell you. It is because the beginnings of sin seem so small, and the first declensions from the path of right so all but imperceptible. It is because out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, and then the long

* Perhaps in the original the sense is not that of moral indignation.

dark catalogue that follows. It is because earth seems so near and death so far ; and temptation so strong ; and sin so enchanting ; and the cup of Circe so bright ; and the siren's song so sweet ; and punishment so improbable ; and the recovery so easy ; and God so far away. It is, in Scripture language, because " the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked ; who can know it ? " You cannot keep the law by merely *saying* you will keep the law. The Jews tried it. They surrounded the law with a hedge of minute and numberless observances. What came, then, of the morality of the Jews as a nation ? The semblance without the reality ; sin sanctioned by legal subterfuge ; the whiteness of the plastered sepulchre, full within with dead men's bones and all uncleanness. In one word, Pharisaism. They corrupted what they exalted ; they hugely violated what they trivially obeyed. And the Greeks and Romans--some of them tried it, and with what result ? Pagan society in general became in generation after generation a fouler sink of unspeakable corruption. The philosophers, who the most loudly professed virtue, were too often the very source of bad example. The poets confess that they have reached the lowest depths of degeneracy. " The age of our parents," says Horace, " worse than that of our grandsires, has brought forth a more worthless race in us, and we shall soon yield a more deteriorated

offspring." "There will be nothing worse," says Juvenal, "which posterity can add to our morals; our descendants will only be able to reproduce our decays and our desires."

6. It is all this that St. Paul means when he says that the law was weak; that it could not give life; that though in itself holy, and just, and good, it was a curse, a bondage, a burden, which neither they nor their fathers were able to bear. Let me briefly sum up for you his views as you will find them scattered through his Epistles, especially those to the Romans and the Galatians. The law of God may be regarded under two aspects: the law of natural religion—the unwritten law on the fleshly tables of the heart—the silent Decalogue of the conscience—the voice of God within us; and the written law—the law of Scripture—the law of revelation—the law promulgated amid the thunders of Sinai. Now, the unwritten law, recognized by all nations and all ages—the law "whose seat is the bosom of God, her voice the harmony of the world"—lays down the rules of morality and virtue. Divine, eternal, immutable as is this law, its utter ineffectualness is proved by the universal guilt and ruin of the heathen world, and so completely do we need something stronger than this, that the word "morality" does not occur once in Scripture. "Virtue" is but once used by St. Paul,

and that quite incidentally.* For Christianity required something more divine than virtue,—even holiness.

But the written law—the law of Moses—failed equally. Men did not, of their own strength they *could* not, obey it. Nay, it did but seem to multiply transgressions, and that in two ways. First, by a mysterious tendency in unregenerate nature, it only stimulated the soul of man to disobedience. Because the fruit is forbidden, therefore man thinks of that fruit most, and most desires to pluck it. The perversity of pride, the distortion of will, the depravity of the flesh, is shown by this, that we are ever struggling into forbidden paths, and desiring what is denied us; that the very existence of a prohibition adds intensity to the temptation, and zest to the guilty joy of transgression.

And the law, having thus acted as an incentive to sin, cruelly makes sin seem ten times more sinful. It awakens the sense of sin; it gives terror to the reproaches of conscience; it shows a man that he is naked, and at the same time covers him with shame. It puts an end to ignorance; it abolishes excuse; it creates responsibility; it lights up the criminal court of

* Phil. iv. 8. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament except in 2 Pet. i. 3, 5. In 1 Pet. ii. 9, we have *ἀπειρά*, which has a different meaning.

justice within us as with the lightning's glare, and makes our inevitable self-disgust and self-condemnation louder than the thunder's voice. St. Paul does not attempt to disguise or palliate this terrible mission of the law. It comes with a commandment pure and holy ; it convinces us that this commandment is pure and holy ; it surrounds this commandment with awful sanctions ; it says, " Do it and live ; do it not and die." It makes us feel in our miserable hearts that to do it *is* to live, and not to do it is to die. And yet it gives us no help to obey itself. Nay, it goads our pride, it intoxicates the arrogance of our self-will ; and when we have, in some moment of passion, shattered its granite tables, stifled its voice, murdered its messengers, then it makes us guiltily awake. It comes to us like the cold grey dawn to the wretch who has killed, in drunken fury, his wife or child ; thunders at us, condemns us, glares into our hearts the horror and hideousness of what we have done ; seizes us as with the foul hand of the executioner ; nay, puts the axe into our own hands, and remorselessly bids us execute ourselves. Read attentively the first ten chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and you will see the necessary failure of any attempt to win salvation by your own righteousness, by virtue, by morality. You will see that the law kindles the desire to do wrong ; and deepens the sense of wrong-doing when we

have transgressed. It does not in itself help to make us good, and, when we have broken it, it makes us feel how bad we are. It incites to sin, and at the same time reveals the heinousness of sin. It goads us on to fling ourselves upon its sword, and then the sword grides in the gaping wound.

G. And in that immortal allegory, the "Pilgrim's Progress," which has deeper Christian experience in it than thousands of volumes of technical theology--this is what John Bunyan meant when he tells us how Christian went aside to the house of Mr. Legality, in the village of Morality, and how the path brought him to a hill out of which came flashes of fire, and which threatened to fall on his head, till he did quake and sweat for fear; until Evangelist, with a severe and dreadful countenance, convinced him of his error, and from the burning hill under which Christian stood there came words of fire, which made the hair of his flesh stand up. And this again is what he means when he tells how poor Faithful, after parleying with the old Adam, and receiving such a deadly twitch back, as if a part of himself had been rent away, is pursued by one who knocked him, and laid him for dead; and then struck him another deadly blow on the breast, and then again; and when he cried for mercy, said that he knew not to show mercy. "And that man which overtook you," said Christian, "was Moses; he spareth

none, neither knoweth he how to show mercy to them that transgress his law."

7. Let us stop there for to-day. Of ourselves, we cannot obey ; the law reacheth to the heart, and our hearts are evil. The law pronounces a curse on those who do not walk in it, and we have incurred that curse. The law makes us feel that, if we break but one point, we are guilty of all ; and we have broken many, many points, and many, many times. The law has struck us down ; has pronounced the sentence of death and condemnation upon us. It is a sad, it is a fearful position. How to be delivered from it, we must try more fully to understand in another discourse. When Faithful was in the plight which I have described to you, and Moses was beating and spurning him, there came by One who bade him forbear. "Who was that that bid him forbear?" asked Christian. "I did not know him at first," answered Faithful, "but as he went by I perceived the holes in his hands and his side ; then I concluded that he was our Lord." Even so, my brethren ; this, in part at least, is what St. Paul means when he says that "the law hath been our tutor to bring us to Christ." To Christ : let that be, the ending of our thoughts to atone for all their deficiencies. If we trust in Him we shall find strength for the present as well as deliverance for the past.

I was a stricken deer that left the herd
Long since ; with many an arrow deep infix'd
My panting side was charged, when I withdrew
To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
There was I found by One, who had himself
Been hurt by the archers, In His side He bore,
And in His hands and feet, the cruel scars,
With gentle force soliciting the darts,
He drew them forth, and healed, and bade me live.


VI.

Ἐν Χριστῷ.

THE MAINTENANCE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

“Wherefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature.”—

2 COR. v. 17.

E live in a sinful world ; we are sinners in that sinful world ; the love of God our Father, and the redemption of God our Saviour, provided a way to free us from that condemnation, when

All the souls that were, were forfeit once ;
And He that might the vantage best have took
Found out the remedy.

We are redeemed. But is this redemption to be made an excuse for continuing in sin ? Is pardon to be but “the nurse of second woe” ? Is Christ the minister of sin ? God forbid ! And yet, how can sin be forgiven, unless sin be forsaken ? Of what use even is the payment of the past debt, if we are ever incurring and multiplying a fresh debt ? What avails it that a friend’s bleeding hand has opened the prison

doors if we still prefer the darkness, and hug our chains? Will Christ leave our redemption but half-accomplished? Will God say, "Sinner, I forgive you all that is past; but you can never see my face until you cease to love sin, and to practise sin, in the present; and to that deliverance from present sin I cannot help you; you must help yourself!" Will not many of you say, "I feel the beauty of goodness, the blessing of virtue, but the very fact that I am neither good nor virtuous does but aggravate my misery. You bid me abandon sin; how can I? The will is present with me, but how to do that which is good I find not. God has promised forgiveness to repentance, but what I need is that true repentance from sin. What can help me? Did we not see that honour will not help us? that the name of virtue is very lovely, but that it is not an amulet to charm by? that morality has no power of exorcism whereby she may expel the evil spirits? that the majesty of the moral law is not a majesty of love, but a majesty of terror? It speaks to us in the thunder, not in the still small voice; and the voice it utters with stern indifference, from among the crags of Sinai is, 'This do, and live;' but when prostrate in the dust we confess that this we have not obeyed, and cannot obey, then, like some passionless avenging angel, it calmly draws the sword first to drive us from paradise, then slay us! Is

there no help?" Yes, there is a help ; let us try to see the nature of it. "Oh, my sins, my sins, my sins!" cried the troubled Luther in his monastery at Erfurt. "Do not be so troubled," said his kind friend and director, Staupitz ; "remember that Christ came hither for the pardon of sins." Have you never noticed the infinite blessedness of His own words? "But, that ye may know that the Son of man hath power *on earth*"—not only hereafter, not only in the world to come, but here and now—"to forgive sins—then saith He to the sick of the palsy, Arise, take up thy bed, and walk."

2. I think that here we have reached the very heart of the difficulty. What sinner, awakened by the law to a sense of sin, groaning under the burden of sin, but powerless, as he thinks, to relinquish sin, has not said, "I feel sure that the demon will always be urging me to satisfy the craving that comes upon me ; and the days will go on as they have done through all these miserable years. I shall always be doing wrong and hating myself afterwards—sinking lower and lower, and knowing that I am sinking. Can you give me any hope?" So in a celebrated book speaks a poor soul who had fallen into habitual sin ; and what is the answer? It is, that "it is just such—the helpless, who feel themselves helpless—that God specially invites to come to Him, and offers all the riches of

His salvation ; not forgiveness only ; forgiveness would be worth little if it left us under the power of our early passions ; but strength—that strength which enables us to conquer sin.” “As soon as we lay ourselves at Christ’s feet, we have enough light given us to guide our steps. Carry your difficulty to Christ, along with all your other sins and weaknesses, and remember that He said, ‘Come unto me all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest.’”

3. The thought, then, which I wish to leave with you is, that though of ourselves we can do nothing ; that though we have no power of ourselves to help ourselves ; though we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves ; yet our sufficiency is of God. The doctrine may not be palatable to human pride, which likes to stand on its own manhood, and with its own thews and sinews to wrestle with the principalities and powers of evil. But when human pride has been humiliated to the dust by utter failure ; when, with infinite sadness, our own efforts, though aided by a Father’s unseen grace, have only succeeded in establishing the unstable equilibrium of a most weak and imperfect goodness, then we are driven to find strength and refuge in the thought that without God we can do nothing. It is God who worketh in us both to will and to do of His

good pleasure. If we have advanced but a very small way in the godly life, it is solely by the grace of God that we are what we are. The point to which all along St. Paul, and not St. Paul only but all the Apostles, has been leading us is this : that the true life of a Christian is not a natural but a supernatural life.

There are two words for life in the New Testament ; one describes the natural life, the animal life, the life which we live, the common life of man. The other, when used in its highest sense, implies the divine life, the inspired life, the regenerate life, the life *by* which we live. It is the life of the Spirit—the life in Christ. And this is true life ; this is life eternal. All other life—the life of the flesh, the life of the breathing organism—is but a transient combination of the elements of death. It is the life of the pulse which soon shall beat no more, the life which a few years hence shall be ended by the dishonour of earth, to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust. To the true Christian,

'Tis not the whole of life to live,
Nor all of death to die.

Nay more, to the Christian, the ordinary meanings of life and death are inverted, and that which men call life—the life of eating and drinking, and getting and spending—is death ; and what men call death—the heart ceasing to throb, the flesh returning to the dust, the spirit returning to

God who gave it—yea, that death is life. While he lives in this tent of his pilgrimage the Christian is as dead; when he dies, then he begins truly and fully to live. What else is the meaning of what St. Paul said to the Galatians, "I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live; and yet no longer I, but Christ liveth in me, and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me?"

4. I greatly fear that to some of us all this may seem like mysticism, like mere words, like the idle formulæ of unreal systems. I fear that it will sound to some of us like a tale signifying nothing. My friends, I cannot help that. It is at any rate the tale of the Gospel, the tale of all true religion; and if you reject it, and turn a deaf ear to it, you will but be doing what, in all ages, too many of the world have done. Spiritual things must ever be foolishness to the natural man, because they can only be spiritually discerned. And yet this, and this only—the supernatural life, the life not after the flesh, which is corrupt and perishing, but after the spirit, which is eternal and divine—is the way, and the only way we know, of salvation. To live without it is not to live, but to be dead in trespasses and sins. The spiritual life is the only life which the Scripture recognizes. The life of nature, of self, of egotism, of carnal passion, of

the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is but a semblance and shadow of life ; it is not the life which Christ brought to light. Do not say that I am stringing texts together, for that, as you know, is not my custom ; but read the words of Christ ; read the writings of the two greatest Apostles, St. Paul and St. John, and see whether these things are not as I have said. What said your Saviour ? Did He not say, " I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly ? " Did He not complain, " Ye will not come to Me that ye may have life ? " and again, " I am the resurrection and the life ; whosoever believeth on Me, though he die, yet shall he live ; " and again, " I am the way, the truth, and the life ; " and again, " Because I live, ye shall live also." And does not this one verse sum up all the teaching of the beloved disciple St. John, " He that hath the Son hath life ; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life ? " And does not this one verse again sum up all the teaching of St. Paul, when he wrote to the Colossians, " Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth ; for ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God." All that is essential in St. Paul's theology—the very heart and centre of his system—may be summed up in two words. Those two words are " in Christ." They are the very monogram

of St. Paul. He uses them again and again ; they occur thirty-five times at least in his thirteen short Epistles. It is the characteristic which a modern poet has seen in him --

Christ ! I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you,

•Aye for me too He greatly hath sufficed :

No ! with no winning words I would entice you :

Paul has no honour, and no friend but Christ.

Yet ! through life, death, through sorrow and through
sinning,

He shall suffice me, for He hath sufficed ;

Christ is the end, for Christ was the beginning,

Christ the beginning, for the end is Christ.

5. But you and I will never learn the meaning of those words till we live up to them ; and perhaps you say at once, " How can I live up to them ? how can I ever be in Christ ? how am I to get, where am I to find, this spiritual, this supernatural life ? " Do we then forget, after all these eighteen centuries, do we forget that we are Christians ? We are not to get, not to find it at all. It is given us ; if we have not forfeited it, we have it. We have it : not of ourselves, but it is the gift of God. Were we not baptized ? Have we not been admitted into the Church of Christ ? His death, which is our death unto sin, was prefigured when the Christian was, so to speak, buried with Him in baptism ; His life, which is our life, when we rose, as it were, with Him out of that pure fount ? Whether it be because of paltry controversies about words

or whether it be because of party spirit, or because of our carnal faithlessness, I do not know; but are not most of us too apt to forget that baptism is indeed a sacrament; that there is an inward grace as well as the outward sign; that it is a laver of regeneration; that it seals for us, individually, what Christ's death did for the race; and that by virtue of that spiritual resurrection, we are bidden to count ourselves as dead indeed unto sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord? And, when we ask so helplessly, how we are to be made partakers of the supernatural life, the life in Christ, have we forgotten that the sacrament of the Lord's Supper is one of the appointed means for the strengthening and refreshing of our souls, the keeping alive that grace in our hearts? What is St. Paul's answer to the question, Shall we continue in sin? Is it not, "God forbid! We, who died to sin, how shall we any longer live therein?" and, "As many of you as were baptized into Christ did put on Christ?" Is not your position, my weak and tempted brother and sister, exactly what that of the Israelites was when they had struggled, with much distress and terror, from the low flat plains and sensual bondage of Egypt, with its leeks, and its garlic, and its fleshpots, into the free, pure air of the difficult wilderness? How were they to walk safely in that wilderness, wherein were things

creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts? How were they to escape the demon and the Amalekite, the viper and the fiery flying serpent? Only by the presence, and help, and grace of God always with them. And does not St. Paul see the analogy between our position and theirs in this, that in the parted wave and the cloudy pillar they were all, so to speak, baptized into Moses; and that in the heavenly manna, and the water from the smitten rock, they had a spiritual food, which was a dim foreshadowing of the body and blood of Christ? Those two holy Sacraments are the appointed outward means to continue for us the spiritual, the divine, the eternal, the supernatural life. By virtue of baptism we share in the mystery of Christ's death and Christ's resurrection; and when we have not rendered vain that baptismal grace, in the Lord's Supper we become partakers in His life. If we fulfil the requisite conditions of faith and repentance, God's grace will not be lacking; we, too, shall be "in Christ." The law cannot give us life: our own efforts cannot give us life: a mystic union with Christ is the sole way of life; the Sacraments are means of that mystic union; by one of them, Baptism, we have all been baptized into Christ already; by the other--the Lord's Supper--we may ever renew our participation in His life.

6. In Christ. Those two words contain the

very secret, the sole secret, of the Christian life. To have died with Christ unto sin ; to have risen with Christ to righteousness ; to grow in Christ by holiness—that is to be a Christian. The righteousness of God ; the non-fulfilment of it by man ; the fulfilment of it by Christ ; the forgiveness of past sins through Him ; the strength in Him amid the temptations of the present ; the identification with Christ by faith—there you have the Gospel of salvation. Are you troubled by any or all of the forms of evil passion ? Die to them—Christ did. So shall you rise with Him ; become a new creature ; and be transformed by the renewing of your minds.

7. Search your New Testaments through and through, and you will find them full of this. The Christian who tries to do without Christ—without His cross, without His resurrection—is not a Christian, and cannot, in Christ's sense, live. The necessity that we should be in Him, and that His life should be our life, is illustrated by three metaphors. Sometimes the Church is a spiritual House, of which we are lively stones, built on one, the one sole living foundation-stone of Christ. Sometimes Christ is a Vine, of which the members of His Church are the branches, and of which each, if it abide in the vine, beareth fruit ; but if it abide not in the vine, becomes an abominable branch, cut off and withered. More often is implied a union still more absolute, still

more organic. The Church is a living Body, which has many members, but of which Christ is the Head, and each Christian must share in the life of the Head, in all things, fitly joined together and growing in one common love. "We are," says St. Paul to the Ephesians, "members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones." "For," he says to the Romans, "as we have many members in one body, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ and severally members one of another." And this is illustrated by those difficult words of Christ, "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, abideth in me, and I in him;" and, "If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink." So that all Christ's invitations seem to be summed up in these words, "Abide in me;" as are all His Apostle's doctrines in the words, "In Christ Jesus."

8. I have taken you, then, to the word and to the testimony, and if you cannot accept what I have said to you, it is that as yet you have not attained to the spiritual mind, which alone can discern spiritual things, and therefore you do not like, and will not accept, your Saviour's call. But until we do, we cannot conquer sin; cannot live the life of holiness; cannot therefore see God. "If Christ is in you, then the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is life because of righteousness"; but, on the other hand, if Christ be not in you your mind is carnal, and the carnal

mind is death, and they that are in the flesh cannot please God. This, then, is to conquer sin and to be holy ; to live by the faith of the Son of God ; to live the life lived with Christ in God. "To dwell in Him," says St. John, "is to keep His commandments."

9. And since I desire to pursue this question to the end ; to meet every inquirer to the full ; to tell you all I know and can see in Scripture of the counsel of God, we shall, please God, pursue this inquiry yet further ; but now I would merely leave it to your meditations, praying God to bless them and to guide them aright. "In Christ"—let us fix our hearts and thoughts on these words. We are in Christ, we are new creatures ; here, or nowhere, lies the secret of holiness ; the escape from temptation ; the conquest over sin ; the deliverance from present weakness. Are we in Christ or not ? If we are, then for us old things have passed away, all things have become new. If we are not—then I need not tell you what our state is, for then we all know it, or have known it, from fatal experience. But, if not, let us come to Him ! The worse we are the more let us come ; the more unfit we are, the more let us come. "His office," says an old writer, "is to save ; and mine to look to Him for help. If evil tempers arise, I go to Him as some demoniac. If deadness creeps

upon me, I go as a paralytic. If dissipation comes, I go as a lunatic. If darkness clouds my face, I go as a Bartimæus. And when I pray, I always go as a leper, crying, as Isaiah did, Unclean, unclean." And when we go we are sure that He will hear us, for "him that cometh unto me," He said, "I will in nowise cast out."

VII

Ἐν Χριστῷ.

II.

“For as many of you as were baptized into Christ, did
put on Christ.” --GAL. iii. 27.

IN these few plain pastoral sermons, which I designedly make as simple as I can, we have endeavoured to consider, step by step, the main elements in the Gospel of man's salvation. I can easily imagine that many of you have been able to follow me most of the way with assent, and understanding. None of you would find any difficulty in admitting that we belong to a guilty race, or in confessing that we are personally guilty before God. All of us, as Christians, believe with all our hearts in the forgiveness of sins by God's free grace, bestowed on us in the redemption wrought through Christ. Most of us, doubtless, are ready to accept and believe in that finished work without idle theories, or party nicknames, or theological

quarrels. And when from the subject of deliverance from past guilt we proceeded to consider how we are to be delivered from present sin, and present weakness, I know that you went with me when I showed you that it is not to be won by any reliance on ourselves, by any law of morals, or code of honour, or ideal of virtue. But when I came to this most important theme of all, and set before you what Scripture tells us of the way, and the only way, which God has provided—what happened? To some of you, I know, those thoughts were precious; enlightened by spiritual experience, you saw at once—you could at once adduce the testimony of your own consciences—that I was telling you the words of God. But am I not rightly interpreting the hearts of others when I say that at this very point they failed to follow me? They felt, with a sense of disappointment, that here they had been brought exactly to that stage where they found the ideas of the Christian faith unpractical and impracticable. They said to themselves with a sigh that this did not help them; that this, at any rate, was not for them. I am not surprised. It always has been so, it always will be so. Just as to the blind eye light is invisible; just as to the deaf ear there is no melody in the harp; just as to the dead taste honey has no sweetness, so the truths of the Gospel are unreal, unintelligible, valueless to the natural heart. The

ancient world was divided into two classes, Jews and Greeks. The Jews were great orthodox theologians, the Greeks were acute, subtle philosophers : yet how did the doctrine of the Cross appear to them ? " We preach," says St. Paul, " Christ crucified ; unto Jews, a stumbling-block, and unto Gentiles, foolishness ; but, unto them that are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God." Now, in this respect we may still be as Jews and Greeks. We have been called ; but we must have obeyed the call before the Cross and its meaning are to us the wisdom and the power of God. Have we not seen that all St. John's teaching might be summed up in the words, " He that hath the Son of God, hath life ? " and that all St. Paul's Gospel might be concentrated in the two short words, " In Christ ? " And did I not show you the extent to which this truth - that the Christian life is a life in Christ, and that a life not in Christ is not life but death--is illustrated by the comparisons of Christians to stones in a heavenly Temple ; to branches in a fruitful Vine ; to members of a sacred Body ? Did I not prove to you that this view of our union with Christ, as the sole way of salvation, is most emphatically and repeatedly taught by our Blessed Lord Himself ? And did I not further say, that since the Christian life is not a natural

but a supernatural life, it is given us from above : that the seed of it is given us in Baptism, the strength for it supplied in the Lord's Supper? And did I not further show you that this mystic union with Christ by which alone we can conquer sin, is the very thing shadowed forth to us in both these sacraments of Christ? It is shadowed forth to us in baptism, because the dipping of the child beneath the water of the font was meant to be the outward symbol of his death with Christ unto sin; and the lifting him out of it, the symbol of his resurrection with Christ unto righteousness. And it is shadowed forth in the Lord's Supper, because the bread we eat is a communion of the body of Christ, and the wine we drink a communion of the blood of Christ; so that we, being many, are one body in Christ, for we are all partakers of that one body. Alas! we can only understand this in proportion as we live up to it. To you especially, young men, young women, I know that it will sound like something very far away from life and its ordinary thoughts--unless, indeed, you have learnt to put on Christ, and unless, at your confirmation, if not earlier, you really tried to give yourselves to Him. But, for that very reason, these truths are most needful to you; the more needful the less you can at present realize them. You wish to be holy,

to forsake sin, to end the painful struggles of a divided self; you would be saved from the dualism in which the flesh struggles against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh; you would fain slay your worse self, and trample the serpent of temptation under foot. You yearn to be no longer the poor slave which, alas! you have been, and you are. Well, it is a noble desire, a god-like struggle; a battle at which angels and the King of angels look on with sympathy. How can we help you in it? We cannot help you; no living man, though he understand all mysteries and all knowledge, could help you—Paul himself cannot help you; an archangel from heaven could not help you in any way but one, and that is by pointing you to Christ. You cannot climb into God's sheepfold by any other way; there is none other name under heaven whereby we may be saved. To be what you wish to be you must be in Christ. If any man is in Christ, he is living; in the spirit; if he be not in the spirit, he is in the flesh; if he be in the flesh, he shall die—nay, so long as he lives in the flesh he is dead while he liveth. Read the Baptismal and Communion services, and you will see that the whole of the Prayer-book may be summed up in the two word "in Christ." Read the Old and the New Testaments, and you will find that the whole essence of the Bible also may be summed up in

the two words "in Christ." Do you doubt it? Well, then, I desire nothing better than you should and search for your own life. "Ye search the Scriptures," said our Lord, "for in them ye think that ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me. And ye will not come unto Me that ye might have life." Look out the many places where St. Paul uses the words "in Christ." Do you think that he is using a mere dead shibboleth; a mere meaningless formula; a mere cant phrase, when he talks of Churches in Christ; of the dead in Christ; of our being fellow-workers in Christ; of having glory in Christ; hope in Christ; consolation in Christ; holiness in Christ; life itself in Christ? St. Paul at any rate was not in the habit of using cant words. I have told you some of the metaphors he uses to express this subject in every possible way. I will tell you another. He compares Christ to a garment to be put on by faith; to be worn by faith over our own soiled self. Before we come to Christ we are stained through and through with sin; pride has been the girdle of our loins; selfish interest and unhallowed passion the girdle of our reins: we have clothed ourselves, it may be, with malice as with a garment, with uncleanness as with a clinging robe. Well, however much we may strut in them, these are vile robes for earth; still viler for eternity. Others see, if we do not, how

utterly they misbecome. Fling them off. Put on, he says, the Lord Jesus Christ. "Ye were taught," he says, "in Him, even as truth is in Jesus, that ye put away the old man, which waxeth corrupt after the lusts of deceit, and that ye put on the new man, which after God hath been created in righteousness and holiness of truth." Is it not, in another form, Christ's own parable of the wedding garment—the white and kingly robe of His innocence freely given to us in the place of our own vile rags? What does all this mean if it be not what I have striven to set before you; that we can only be true Christians—only cease to walk after the flesh—only bring forth the fruits of the spirit—by virtue of a life not our own, a life lived by faith in the Son of God? Our own natural life is a low and a base life. It is the life of selfishness; the life of greed; the life of lust; the life of ambition; the life of display. It is earthly, sensual, devilish; it is full of hatred, deceit, malignity; it is hateful to God, it is unlovely to man. What wretchedly mean, false, greedy, corrupted characters we see around us in the world! How little can we ourselves boast over them! We call this the natural life, because it is the common life of man, in one or other of its dark sad elements; but it is not really natural, but unnatural. It is the life of a nature once godlike, now fallen; once innocent, now depraved. Our natural life is in very



truth our best, our highest life ; our life as immortal beings ; the life of our spirits which are eternal, not of our carnal understandings which listen to the serpent, of our mortal bodies which are sisters of the worm. And since our spirits are the breath of God within us ; since they can be only renewed by the Spirit of God ; since we can only walk in the Spirit when we are in Christ, and so are a new creation ; therefore we may say truly that the life of the Christian is a supernatural life. It could not be lived at all but by virtue of that supernatural change, that blessed re-creation, that new life which we draw from union with Christ, even as the vine-branch draws only from the vine its purple fruitfulness. We live surrounded on all sides by the near, gross, seducing interests of time. We live the life of the senses which very soon shall be dulled by death, and of the passions whose instruments shall soon be crumbled into dust ; but the only life possible to the immortal being is the life of the spirit which moves among the things eternal and unseen. The moralist says that " this time-world flickers on the grand still mirror of eternity, and man's little life has duties which alone are great." The mystic says, " He to whom time is as eternity and eternity as time, he alone is freed from strife." But to the true saints of God the meaning of these sayings is best expressed in those two words, " in Christ."

We are very far as yet from having fully

entered into the meaning of those words. We must return to them again. But it is something if I make you feel—at least with your understandings—that they are there in Scripture, and that they have a meaning in which lies the only possible deliverance from the pain and shame of present sin. Even if as yet to you personally, to the human heart by which you live, they have no meaning, but are only to you as the voice of a discourser, or of one who sings a roundelay—still I must tell you of them. I can only set this idea of “in Christ” before you in poor, weak human words; and those words, if you will not even try to get for yourselves into the divine heart of their meaning, may well be nothing more to you than

Tedious as a twice-told tale,
Vexing the dull ear of a chowzy man.

May God make it otherwise! No man can save his brother's soul; that can only be done by the grace of the Holy Spirit of God, bringing home to us the finished work of Christ. And even the grace of the Holy Spirit cannot do it, if we resist it. If we obstinately avert our hearts, how can they become vessels of grace? “The light of heaven,” says the Chinese proverb, “cannot shine into an inverted bowl.” Ah! if you would feel that you cannot be saved from the tyranny of your sins except by living the life in Christ,

you must open your hearts to rays of heaven. How are you to understand this Christian mysticism ; this foolishness of the Cross ; this distant unreality of the Gospel message ? I will tell you the best way. The poet says :

- Sound, sound the clarion, shrill the life,
To all the sensual world proclaim,
One crowded hour of glorious life
Is worth an age without a name.

I translate that into Christian language, and I say that if you would devote one hour, one half-hour, one poor quarter of an hour to thinking on these things, reading of them, trying to grasp them, praying to God to enable you to grasp them ; still more, if, but for one day, you could personally experience the life in Christ, could feel the strength of it, could live in the light of it, could be dilated by its all-pervading happiness, could be thrilled with its illimitable consolations—then you would know more about it than a thousand sermons could teach you—you would set to your seal that God is true. If you will but wrestle with the angel and not let him go until he blesses you, then that wrestling would soon crowd eternity into an hour, and stretch an hour into eternity.

Oh ! believe, then, that the necessity of becoming partakers of the Divine life—this mystic union with Christ, this putting on Christ, this justification by faith—for all these are but

different ways of regarding the same great truth—is not a mere fantastic phraseology, which has nothing to do with daily interests, but is, to a Christian, as his inmost life. It is the very central thought of Scripture, the brightest gem of that oracular Urim and Thummim which gleams on the breast of the great High Priest. If the Old Testament be as a ring of gold which forms a precious setting for the jewels of the New, then the central diamond of all those jewels—the one for the sake of which the whole ring was designed—the one to which the gold of Ophir, and topaz, and amethyst, and emerald, are but the subordinate setting—is this thought of the life in Christ. Do not throw it away as valueless, or valueless to you: if you do, you will be poor indeed. Nay, rather test it. Smite it, if you will, to test its genuineness, with the strongest hammer of inquiry; fling it into the fiercest flame of criticism; pour on it the most corrosive acid of doubt. It has stood all these tests for eighteen hundred years, and is still the same priceless, flawless, eternal gem; the one jewel of the saints of God, which the world can neither give nor take away. Wonder not, if, with most unworthy hands, I would feebly try to hold it up in many different lights before you, that you may see its pure water and catch its ten-thousand-coloured flame;

Pray, then, that you may not fail to under-

stand the plan of God at its most decisive point. Having been provided with a deliverance from God, do not, from negligence or wilfulness, fail to obtain it. Will you, after a little careless fumbling with it, fling away the golden key which alone can let you into the narrow lane of escape from the prison of your sins? That golden key is, I say again and again, life in Christ, union with Christ. Try, my friends--above all you who are young, and you who are men of the world--try to get rid of the disappointed feeling that this has no meaning for you. Remember that your spirit is something far higher than your bodily desires or your natural souls. You may be living the life of the flesh, but for all that you are eternal beings, sons of God: a little lower than the angels; and, with your spirit, you can understand these truths, if you strive and pray to do so. They are not only meant for you, but, seeing that you need them most, they are meant most of all for you. I think you all know me well enough to know that I am not one who would willingly offer you a mere conventional theology, a mere professional shibboleth, instead of such fragment of saving truth as God may enable me to see and know. In this scorching wilderness of life, I would not merely mock your thirst by holding forth to you a sponge of vinegar upon a reed of hyssop; but, if I may, I would

point you to the living water from the Rock of Christ. In this weltering deluge of the world, in which so many of us are engaged in despairing buffet with the drowning waves, I would fain push to you, not the woven straws of artificial orthodoxy, but a plank to which others have clung, to which you may cling, and yet be saved. But you must not think that I do not feel for, that I do not realize, your difficulties, in making these thoughts practical. Those difficulties have never been more forcibly expressed than by the words which a modern poet puts in the mouth of a lonely thinker, whose grave may be seen at Paris, with the inscription on it, "Eternity, become my refuge." Imagining himself to have lived when our Saviour was alive on earth, he says :

Oh, had I lived in that great day,
 How had its glory new
 Filled earth and heaven, and caught away
 My ravi-shed spirit too !
 No cloister-floor of humid zone
 Had been too cold for me ;
 For me no Eastern desert lone
 Had been too far to flee.
 No lonely life had passed too slow,
 When I could hourly see
 That wan, nailed Form, with head drooped low
 Upon the bitter Tree !
 Could see the Mother and the Child,
 Whose tender, winning arts
 Have to His little arms beguiled
 So many wounded hearts.

Ay ! ages long endured His span
 Of life, 'tis true received ;
 That gracious Child, that thorn-crowned Man
 He lived, while we believed.

While we believed on earth He went,
 And open stood His grave ;
 Men called from chamber, church, and tent,
 And Christ was by to save.

Now He is dead ; far hence He lies
 In the lone Syrian town ;
 And on His grave with shining eyes
 The Syrian stars look down.

I have quoted to you these verses at length because they express the common spirit of uncertainty and doubt which may exist in some of your own hearts—even though it be not openly expressed. "He lived, while we believed;" ay, there is the very central fact: "Now He is dead;" ay, there is the ruinous error. If we do not believe, then for us Christ does not, and cannot, live. The justification which God wrought for us in Him, is justification by faith; and the very first, lowest, primary act of faith, the first rock on which Faith takes her stand to spread her angel wings for flight heavenwards, is belief in the Son of God in the revelation of God in Christ. What is it which alone has begotten, or can beget us again to a lively hope? is it not the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead? What is it for which St. Paul says that he counts all things but loss?

is it not that he may know Him, and the power of His resurrection? If we have not got this belief, if we cannot get it, then we have no way of deliverance from sin's bondage of which to tell you. If such a way there be at all, apart from Christ, it must be some way of which a Christian as such knows nothing. But you, my brethren, are not Buddhists; are not Atheists;—you are Christians, and the inmost meaning of Christianity is the life in Christ of which I have told you. In one of those tales into which the present age has thrown some of its deepest religious convictions, a young girl who has lost all earthly hopes, meets with her lover who has also lost his. She is intending to devote herself henceforth to the service of the sick in hospitals, and he says to her, “But what a life! what remains to you?” “My work,” she says, “remains to me, and God who speaks to the soul, and the soul which speaks to God, and so rests.”—“The priest told you this?” “No,” she said, “the days tell me; and no priest, no creature can explain it, it is a mystery. To a certain extent, every Christian is, and must be, a mystic. I cannot tell you how God approaches the soul; but, by the tenderness of friends, by the holiness of His saints, by the beauty of His world, by the power of His Spirit, by the life of His dear Son, He does approach the soul; and

the soul, by each conflict, by each good deed, by each word of prayer, seems to get nearer to Him. It is strange, but it is true : it is life."—"I wish I could think it," the youth replies. "Ah, my friend, if you could think it, you would never be alone."—"But," he said, "I am alone. There seems so little for which to live." "There is One," she answers, "by whom the angels live; and who thought us worth His life. Follow Him, in labour, in love, and in trust."—"Ah," said the young man, "but I despair. Once in every man's life he meets the Sphinx, and if he cannot answer her riddle, he dies; I cannot understand, nor answer, and I shall be devoured." "Never; answer the riddle of the Sphinx by love, and by work."—"But where?" he asks, "and when? and how?" "Everywhere," is the striking answer; "God is everywhere; and men are in need."

My friends, if you will faithfully set to work; humbly do your duty; sincerely try to benefit your neighbour; earnestly strive to mortify the flesh; make a real effort of will and watchfulness to cast the devil, whatever it be, out of your heart—you will find that Christ is not dead. Even though He died, He also rose, He ascended. It is not only that He once walked this earth, but that His life is in it: it is not only that He is in His unseen heaven, far away; you need not ascend into heaven to find

Him, or descend into the abyss to bring Him forth; nay, but He is very nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart. Arise, He calleth thee! He who cleansed the disease of the leper; who opened the eyes of the blind; who suffered the sinners and the harlots to sit forgiven beside His feet, He will not cast thee out, however poor and stained thou art; however vulgar and wretched and bad a Christian thou mayst be, He will not cast thee out, for He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Behold, He stands at the door and knocks. Begin at the beginning. Pray to Him. Try to do His will. Then His Father will come, and He will come. Do not trouble yourself about finding them, for then you shall be found. Have you not often heard in lovely melody, "If with all your hearts ye truly seek me, ye shall ever surely find me"? and if those be not exactly the words of Scripture these are: "If from thence thou shalt seek the Lord thy God, thou shalt find Him, if thou seek Him with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." And these are: "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

VIII.

Ἐν Χριστῷ.

III.

“Who hath blessed us with every spiritual blessing in Christ.”—Eph. i. 3.

IN the course of our inquiries into the way of salvation, we found ourselves face to face with the great problem of all—how are we to be holy? how are we to have the divine beatitude of the pure in heart? how are we to gain, by sins forsaken, the perfect personal assurance of sins forgiven? how are we to serve God not only with our lips (which is so easy), but in our lives, which is so painfully difficult? how are we to cut ourselves loose from the corpse of our dead selves—gaining deliverance from the carnal mind which is enmity against God? Ah! these are the questions of questions! Every one of us who has in him the smallest grain of seriousness is asking, or has learnt to answer, them. If in our lives we can answer these, we shall indeed be neither barren

nor unfruitful in the work of the Lord ; we shall be able to bless God for our creation ; we shall have solved all that is essential in the problem of human life. But when we look round on all the sin and all the sorrow ; when we see the world heaving like a troubled sea whose waters cast up mire and dirt—are we not forced to ask is this all ? is it only this, that Christ sees from that heaven where, by man's sins, he is still as it were crucified afresh ;—only this after the passion of a thousand years ? And do we even need to look around us ? Is it not enough to look into our own hearts ? Do we see others proud and mean, covetous and hypocritical, impure and unkind ; and alas ! are there none of these fibres of bitterness, none of these poisoned chalices, none of these ashen fruits in our own hearts ?

2. How to be better ? how to be not only forgiven but restored ? We cannot simply deliver ourselves. Here then comes the crucial point. Is there any help for us ? any balm in Gilead to restore our souls ? I have tried to set before you the only direct answer which Scripture gives

the answer for the sake of which Christianity exists ; the sole answer of St. John, of St. Paul ; nay, the sole answer of our Saviour Christ. It may be condensed, as I told you, into the two words “in Christ.” I showed you that, from beginning to end, all the New Testament is full of it ; that if you want the central truth of St.

Paul's Gospel, it is in the one verse, "If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature"; that if you want the central truth of St. John's holy mysticism, it is in the one verse, "He that hath the Son hath life, and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life." And these words of the Apostle are but methods of throwing fresh light on Christ's injunction, "Abide in me, and I in you." And if you say, "But this is not the natural life"; my answer is that the life of the true Christian is not a natural, but a supernatural life. The sacraments, when duly received, are the highest appointed outward means of this divine life in the soul. To say this indeed is only to say that they are sacraments. You know that I have never urged on you the sacraments with disproportionate exaltation; nay more, that, except they be received with faith and repentance, the mere dead act of taking them is valueless. But let me at the same time solemnly remind you that (in the familiar words of our Catechism) they were ordained by Christ Himself as generally necessary to salvation. This doctrine you will say is difficult. Ay, it is difficult; but we have nothing to do with its difficulties, and they are difficulties not to the spiritual but to our carnal minds. God says to us respecting difficulties such as these, "Do the will, and you shall know of the doctrine; obey my voice, and ye shall live."

3. But, as I have proved to you beyond all shadow of doubt that Scripture knows of no method of holiness, no power of perfect conquest over sin except the union with Christ, the life in Christ, the indwelling of Christ, what I would now try to make clear to you is, not only that God has said it, but, on the one hand, that man has tried it, and never found it fail; and that, on the other hand, when he has not tried it he has always failed.

i. Though all men are imperfect, and many are grievous sinners, and some are horribly depraved; yet, nevertheless, there have been in this world good men, holy men, yea, saints—men of exemplary innocence, of exceptional nobleness, of absolute self-dedication. We gaze over the vast plains of history, and they look too often like a wilderness of miseries and of crimes. Yet, here and there, among the dead levels of bad and common men, rises some child of God like a mountain with earth-mists about its feet, but soaring into the aerial ocean, and with heaven's glory on its crest. We look on the life of the world around us, and it looks like some tangled waste of briars and thistles; yet, out of the midst of it, half tangled by its undergrowth, its bark rent by thorns, not only gnawed at its base by evil things, but often scathed to its topmost bough by the conflagrations which are kindled among its brambles, there rises as it

were a cedar of Lebanon, and men rest under its shadows. Such among our dwarfed natures are the saints of God. How came these mountains among the molehills; among the thistles these forest trees? what made some men so transcendently better than their brethren? how came they clean among the corrupted? among the greedy, whence came their scorn of gold? when the faces of all around them were furrowed by evil passions, how came these to be changed into God's image, from glory to glory? Among the unseemly tatters, among the crowding mendicants at Satan's shrine, what was it that enabled them to walk, for they were worthy, in snow-white robes? "Oh," the weak heart exclaims, "oh, that we might know the secret, how we might do the same!" Well! ask them, my friends, and they will tell you. "O brothers, O sisters," they will say, "there is no secret but what you know. If our robes are white it is because, once stained, they have now been washed in the blood of the Lamb. If our faces shine, it is because we have reflected, like the planets, the radiance of that Sun of Righteousness who is the express image of His Father's person. It is He who has led us by the hand out of the world's fogs to its sunlit hills. It is He who has made our boughs fruitful as Eshcol, our branches flourishing as Lebanon. If the life which we lived in the flesh was pure and

noble, it is because it was lived by faith in the Son of God. Not unto us, not unto us, but unto His name the praise! Think not that you cannot be as we were, yea, and much more blessed; for our God is still your God, and our Saviour your Saviour; and He is risen, as He said. He is risen that you may rise; He is not dead, but alive for evermore. He said unto you, Ye will not come unto Me that ye may have life."

ii. Ask them, I say, and they will tell you, every one of them. Ask St. Stephen. What said he as, amid fierce enemies, he raised to heaven an angel face?—was it not, "Behold I see the heaven opened, and the Son of man standing"—standing to strengthen and to deliver—"on the right hand of God"? What said the early martyr St. Ignatius, when he stood before Trajan, the great Emperor?—he said that he bore Christ within him, "Yea! for it is written. I will dwell in them and walk in them." Ask St. Irenæus. "Renounce Christ!" stormed the Proconsul. "Eighty and six years have I served Him," answered the aged Bishop, "and He hath done me no wrong, and how can I speak evil of my King, my Saviour"? Ask those early Christians who adopted as their watchword in danger the Greek word for Fish, only because the letters of that word stood for the letters Jesus Christ, Son of God, Saviour. Ask the meaning of the very word

Christian, which is "one devoted to Christ." Ask the sainted Bonaventura, who, when St. Thomas of Aquino wanted to know the source of his amazing knowledge, pointed in silence to his crucifix. Ask St. Thomas à Kempis, the holy writer of the "Imitatio Christi," and he will say, "When Jesus is present all is well, and nothing seems difficult; but when Jesus is absent, everything is hard." Ask the knights who fought so bravely, and they will tell you that it was because they took Christ for their Captain. Ask Luther, and he says, "To abide in Christ, does not mean merely to have thought about Christ; Christ does not speak about bare thoughts, but that I, body and soul, godliness and sin, folly and wisdom, am in Him; and He with His wisdom, holiness, righteousness, blessedness, is in me." Ask St. Philip Neri, and his prayer will answer, "Lord, keep thy hand over Philip, or else Philip will betray Thee." Ask the excellent Laocordaire, and he will answer in his motto—*Et teneo et tencor*: "I am both holding and am being held."

iii. I might go on indefinitely, for all the heart of true religion is in this; but ask any of the holiest men of ancient or modern ages, and unanimously from life after life, from deathbed after deathbed, they will answer, "Our lives were holy because they were hid with Christ in God." Or ask those who have been eminent in the biography of England—whether it be Baxter or Leighton

whether Ken or Bunyan, whether Toplady or Wesley, whether Watts or Neale, whether Faber or Bonar—and as in the voices of ten thousand hymns, breathed forth in the passionate devotion of ten thousand times ten thousand hearts,—they will all give the same answer. It is now, “Abide with me, for falls the eventide;” and now, “Thou, O Christ, art all I want;” and now, “Just as I am, without one plea;” and now, “Art thou weary? art thou languid? art thou sore distressed?” and now, to quote but one, where myriads might be quoted:

Other refuge have I none,
Hangs my helpless soul on Thee;
Leave, ah leave me not alone,
Still support and comfort me!
All my hope on Thee is stayed,
All my help from Thee I bring;
Cover my defenceless head
With the shadow of Thy wing!

All, all of them will echo back the two words, “In Christ.”

iv. Now, whence comes this immense and beautiful unanimity among the saints of God? Some of these were Protestants, some Romanists; and some lived well-nigh two thousand years ago, some died but yesterday; some were Evangelicals, some Ritualists, some were Baptists, some Puritans, some Churchmen, some Dissenters; and some in their lifetimes would have burned the others. Yet you see they all

agree in this—in this, Jerome is as Augustine, Luther is as Bonaventura, Faber is as Toplady, and Doddridge as Mason Neale. Why? because they knew, by personal experience, that the life in Christ is the only life that can be holy; and that if we try to master our temptations any otherwise than by Christ's indwelling spirit we shall only fight a humiliated and a failing battle.

4. And as men have succeeded in attaining the holy life in exact proportion as they have been in Christ, so have they failed apart from Him. Look at the children of this world without Christ now, and have we not seen already that it is so with them? Is it not an overwhelming proof of what I say, that, until Christ came, such a thing as holiness was—even as an ideal—hardly known? Look at the heathen world. In Grecian history there are stately and heroic figures, but among all the multitudes, in those long centuries, of their best and wisest, I do not know of one—scarcely even Socrates—whom we could call holy. All brave, and many noble, yes; and some pure; but holy, no! And in all the long centuries of Roman history I know but two—one an emperor and one a slave—and of their private lives we know but little, and both of them lived long after the truths of Christianity were in the air. There was a contemporary of St. Paul's, a great heathen and statesman, Seneca, the brother of Gallio, who has written the most exquisite moral

truths ; so exquisite and so exalted, that many have thought he must have learnt them from St. Paul ; and he passed among the Romans of his day for a model philosopher, and a man pre-eminently good. Yet it is but too true, as has been said of him, that he declaimed in praise of poverty with two millions sterling out at usury ; he meditated epigrams about the evils of luxury in gardens which moved the envy of sovereigns ; he ranted about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered menials of a tyrant ; he celebrated the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son ! And if you look at even the Jewish world before Christ, will you compare it with the Christian ? They had, indeed, types and images, and a partial revelation, but as the shadow to the substance, as moonlight to sunlight, is the holiness of the old Dispensation compared with that of the saints of Christ. David received again the clean heart and the new spirit, but what would have been thought of David now ? No, my friends, the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than these. The times of this ignorance God winked at ; but now, having spoken unto the fathers by the prophets, He hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son. In His name He commandeth all men everywhere to repent, and He inspires the power to perfect repentance.

in sanctification, and to bring forth the fruits meet for repentance in a humble and holy life.

5. But if these things are so; if it is certain, as we have seen to-day---by the failures of those who have tried to live well without Christ, and by the divine successes of those who, because they were in Him, have walked not after the flesh, but after the spirit--does not history prove the truths preached by Christ's Apostles? If the attainment of this life in Christ be represented by our Lord as the one great end of His appearing; if the sacraments were ordained to typify and to aid a death with Him unto sin, and a life with Him unto righteousness, and a mystic union of our lives with His, and His with ours--if, I say, these things are so--then are not these thoughts of infinite importance for our present holiness, for our eternal salvation? If any of you choose to live as unspiritual, as men of the world, in pleasure and in disobedience, the common life of the flesh, then these truths will as yet be all vague and useless to you. They will be vague from the intervening mists of your own character, useless because the spiritual is a language which the carnal cannot understand. And if that be so, then, at present, man cannot help you, but God with His thunders and His earthquakes must fill the valleys of your heart, and lay its mountains low.

But I do not believe that any of you are thus. I believe from your very presence here that you are seekers; that though you may not as yet by any means have conquered sin, you yet desire, however feebly—you are yet striving, however imperfectly—to do so. And if so, remember the Lord's promise: "Seek and ye shall find. Do the will; do with all your hearts the will; strive to do it; pray that you may do it; and then no fear but what you shall know the doctrine. Then in the meaningless and broken notes you shall hear the perfect melody; on the dead letters shall gleam the mystic light. Test Christ by the only test that can be applied to Him—the effort to obey His words. And be sure of this, that the knowledge of Him by innermost contact is possible only when the creature has aspired to be at one with the will of the Creator.

Such knowledge, and such knowledge alone, is life: and without it is no life. If the words be dead to you, may it not be that it is you who kill them, with that death which is strong in him who knoweth but doeth not? The words may be living and winged words, and yet may fall dead in the vapours which steam up from evil hearts, even as fable says that birds drop dead when they fly over the asphaltic sea. But if you have been trying to do His teaching, you are on the way to learn more. Who knows

whether even now, even by these poor words, however unworthy is he who speaks them, Christ, your Christ, your Saviour, may not be teaching you? May He not be coming secretly, unexpectedly, to you, as He once came to the world?

They all were looking for a king
To slay their foes, and lift them high,
Thou cam'st a little baby thing
That made a woman cry.

O Son of Man, to right my lot
Nought but Thy presence can avail;
Yet, on the road Thy wheels are not,
Nor on the sea Thy sail.

My how or why Thou wilt not heed.
But come down thine own secret stain
That Thou may'st answer all my need,
Yea, every bygone prayer.

IX.

St. Paul's Theology.

"FROM FAITH TO FAITH."

"For I am not ashamed of the Gospel; for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is revealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith: as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith."—Rom. i. 16, 17.

GENERALLY, I choose a short text, in order that, whatever becomes of the sermon, the text at least may remain fixed in your memory like a nail in a sure place. The text of my last three sermons has practically been the two words, "In Christ." I told you that those two words were the inmost centre of St. Paul's teaching, and I have endeavoured to prove to you that only by the help of that oneness with Christ is it possible for us to gain final deliverance from the power of besetting sin.

But now we must proceed a step further. I promised you that, so far as I could, I would take you to the depth of this matter; since we can

only attain to holiness by union with Christ. I now would ask with you the further question, "How are we to attain to this life in Christ? Well, my friends, here again, if Scripture be our guide, if Christ be our teacher, there is but one answer, and that is in the two words, *by faith*. "In Christ"—there you have the sole end: "by faith"—there you have the sole means.

Again, I fear that you will wearily turn aside, and say, "This is theology; this is mysticism; this is not for me." Ah! I entreat you not to do so. It is Christ's theology. Look closer at what this means. When I told you that the holy life, the life of perfect mastery over sin and self, was only possible "in Christ," you turned aside, perhaps, with indifference. But I have tried to show you that those two words have a real, a deep, a necessary meaning. Let me—in humble dependence on the Holy Spirit's guidance—try to show you the same of the two words, "by faith." And believe me, that not only does God your Father in heaven require of you no fancy, no formula, nothing unreal, nothing kabbalistic; but also that what He requires is the only thing which you can do; the only condition that you can fulfil; something which is necessary, indispensable, to the very greatest and haughtiest; something which is possible, which is by God's grace easy, to the very humblest soul among you all.

2. If you have ever thoughtfully read St. Paul's Epistles, you will have observed that generally at the beginning, and often also at the end of them, he sums up his main thesis in a few pregnant words. He sums up in the two verses (16, 17) of my text, the inmost idea of his greatest Epistle, and if you understand these two verses you understand the whole of St. Paul's special Gospel; the central revelation which he was missioned to proclaim. All past forgiveness is in them, all present holiness, all future glory. Let us look at them. He has been saying that he wishes to come as a teacher even to Rome; "for," great and splendid as is the imperial city, even there, at the very heart of the world's power and wisdom, "he is not ashamed of the Gospel of Christ." Why should he be ashamed of it?" In the world's mighty metropolis, he is not ashamed of it—poor Jew though he be—"because it is the power of God unto salvation—to every one that believeth," whether Jew or Greek. There you have in a few words the source of the Gospel, God's power; the universality of the Gospel to every one; the condition of the Gospel "to every one that believeth;" the end and aim of the Gospel "unto salvation." And then, not content with this, into the next verse he condenses the *very* meaning, method, essence, and means of what the Gospel is. "For in it," he says, "is re-

vealed a righteousness of God by faith unto faith : as it is written, But the righteous shall live by faith." Volumes upon volumes have been written upon this text ; volumes of dreary exegesis, of drearier theology, of dreariest controversy. Traducianist and Creationist, Pelagian and Augustinian, Calvinist and Arminian, Legalist and Antinomian, Sublapsarian and Supralapsarian, and I know not how many more sects and factions of portentous name, have built upon it their fragmentary systems and shouted over it their unhallowed anathemas. Does it seem presumptuous then to say, in spite of all this controversy, that its meaning is perfectly clear ? It is not presumptuous, if we take St. Paul as his own commentator. It is not presumptuous, if we deal with it as teaching not ideas of the head, but feelings of the heart. So far as we are concerned—for the Godward side of the mystery we cannot of course understand—it means simply this : that, in the Gospel, is revealed to men God's inherent righteousness, which by a judgment of acquittal for sin pronounced upon all believers, once for all, through the death of Christ, He bestowed upon guilty man ; and this righteousness, beginning in us by the trustful acceptance of our reconciliation to God in Christ, ends in that union with Christ, that life in Christ, whereby Christ becomes to us a new nature, a quickening Spirit.

It would be impossible to put deeper meanings into fewer words. The end of the Gospel, he tells us, is that which we all most desire, our salvation. Man is sinful. We are sinful. God is holy and all-holy. Without holiness, no man shall ever see God. Without holiness, therefore, no man can be saved. He who is a sinner cannot be saved, until he ceases to be a willing sinner; he must repent; he must be converted; he must be born again. But all this is beyond his own power. No arch of his can span, no boat of his can traverse, no anchor of his can hold in the vast gulf which separates the unrighteousness of man from the righteousness of God. What then? Is his case hopeless? No, I say again the Gospel is the answer, and the only answer. In that vast gulf, Christ is the bridging arch; Christ the saving boat; Christ is the anchor which can hold fast his storm-tossed soul. A man cannot ever be holy in himself; but he can be holy in Christ, and he can be united with Christ; live in Christ; put on Christ. He can be a stone in the temple, a branch in the vine, a member of the body of Christ by faith. This, for all practical purposes, is what is meant by the phrase justification by faith. Faith is not a merit, but a means. It is the eye by which we look to Christ; it is the hand by which we take hold of Him. If God's love be the cause, and Christ the agent,

and Baptism the initiation, and the Holy Communion the support, and holiness the result, and eternal life the issue of our new birth in Christ, then faith is the instrument, the means. "Faith taketh hold of Christ, and hath him enclosed, as a ring encloses a precious stone; and whosoever is found having this confidence in Christ, to him will God impart His own righteousness; him, though before he have been guilty, will God accept for righteousness in Jesus Christ." To be justified by faith is to be accepted in the Beloved.

3. This was Paul's deep conviction; but let us now fix our thoughts on the particular phrase, "by faith unto faith." What does St. Paul mean when he says that the righteousness of God, bestowed upon us sinners through Christ, is being revealed from faith unto faith, so that the life of the man who is just before God—the only life that can in any way be called life—has its origin and its end, its sole source and sustenance in faith?

4. The very words "by faith unto faith" imply that faith has degrees, that it is progressive. These kinds and degrees of faith are the golden rounds of that ladder of vision whose base was on the earth, but on which angels ascended and descended, and at whose summit was the Epiphany of God.

i. The lowest round of all is the bare belief

that there is a God. There is indeed a state below this ; a state which lies as it were on the damp earth in the chilly darkness, with a stone for its pillow, but which sees no golden dream under its slumbering eyelids, and has no hope, and is without God in the world. How unutterably dreary is this condition !

A great German poet in his youth describes it. He had passed through some painful struggle ; made some sacrifice ; torn at duty's bidding some darling affection out of his heart. And then, not being a believer, there comes on him, not that blessed wellspring of strength which, after some sacrifice for God, springs up sweet and refreshing in the Christian's heart, but a sad and a terrible reaction. His resignation has not been the Christian's childlike resignation to the love of a Father which he knows to be tender and true. It has not been a giving up of what is dear for the eternal love, which not only gives, but in tenfold splendour and beauty also gives us back : it has been a cold submission to the iron decrees of a passionless necessity. And so, in bitter strains, denying Providence, denying the divine beauty of the moral law, he says that " what has been has been, and there is an end of it. The history of the world is nothing more nor less than the judgment of the world. I have given up, but I am sorry that I have given up ; I believed in

retribution ; I believed in the promise of Christ to restore ten-thousandfold my sacrifice of the passions and joys of youth ; but now I believe that immortality is but a mockery ; that it is but man's hope projected into the future." And then he adds that man has two flowers offered to him, hope and enjoyment ; and if any man has chosen hope, then the hope, and the hope only, without any further fruition, has been his reward.

Some years later, he strove to give to these desperate and defiant thoughts a less irreligious colouring. "Live," he says, "in the heaven of the ideal ; fill your thoughts with art and poetry. Around us all is the rude reality of trouble and unrest ; but struggle against it by letting your imagination dream of all that is beautiful and high. Make of the disquietudes, toils, sorrows of your actual life a ladder to the realm of imaginary loveliness." My friends, who can be cheated by language like this ? The Christian does live in the region of the ideal. His conversation is in heaven. Whatsoever things are true, pure, lovely, of good report, he thinks on those. Did the poet indeed think that any, even the chosen few, could be helped in life's trials by moving in thought amid a world of shadows ; or nerved for its efforts by the fancies of an airy dream ? Did he think to make man either better or happier by bidding him join the sluggish and vision-weaving tribe who pamper their hearts

with luxurious sensibilities? This is indeed to cheat us with the mirage, and enrich us with castles in the air. This is indeed to offer us a bag of pearls in the desert when what we want is water to quench our dying thirst. Alas! for the atheist. Better than this, more comforting than this is the very dearest belief that ever was—ay, even that of the devils who believe and tremble. For however dead the belief may be, still, while it exists, the wind of God may breathe upon it as upon the dry bones in the valley of vision, and it may tingle into life once more. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well!

ii. But the next round on the golden ladder is when this faith is not dead, but is a conviction, the evidence of things not seen. The moment a man has this, he begins to walk by faith and not by sight. He begins to have confidence towards God. "The Bible divides men into two classes: those who trust in themselves and those who trust in God. The one class walk in their own light; trust in their own strength; fight their own battles; and have no confidence otherwise. The others, not neglecting to use the wisdom and strength which God has given them, still trust in His wisdom and His strength to carry out the weaknesses of theirs. The one class go through life as orphans; the other have a Father;"—even if as

a Father they have hardly learnt to know Him yet.

iii. But there is a step higher. God seems so vast in His immensitude, so infinite in His passionless omnipotence, that had He never revealed Himself otherwise than as Eternity and Infinitude, our utmost efforts to see Him would, as it were, but show us some dazzling blaze of glory, of which the outskirts were dark with excess of light; or, at the best, a throne in the intense void, whereon "the snowy skirting of a garment hung." But when a yet nearer faith cometh by hearing; when to us the All-great becomes also the All-loving; when faith in God the Father becomes faith in God manifested in the flesh, seen of angels, believed on in the world, received up into glory; when faith in God becomes faith in Christ, the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person; when we have got to know the mystery of the Gospel, that a Man shall be a hiding-place from the wind, a covert from the tempest; that God became man, and dwelt among us; that it is a face like our own which looks down upon us, a hand like our own which shall fling open to us the gates of everlasting life;—and when, yet further, faith in Christ becomes faith in His blood, and, becoming more intense as it narrows, passes from theoretic assent into practical conviction; when—

Through the thunder comes a human voice,
 Saying: "Oh heart! I made a heart beat here;
 Face, my hands fashioned, see it in myself
 Thou hast no strength--nor mayst conceive of mine;
 But love I gave thee, with Myself to love,
 And thou must love Me who have died for thee;"

---when indeed a man has felt the strength of these convictions, he becomes a Christian. The man who believes in one God may, by virtue of that belief, be a hero or a prophet, and not far from the kingdom of heaven; but yet he that is least in that kingdom is greater than he.

iv. And this faith in Christ has stepped on a yet loftier round of the golden ladder when, touched by spiritual emotion, it has become a complete self-surrender of heart and will. Then, indeed, does man believe with the heart unto righteousness, and confess with the mouth unto salvation. There are Christians, and Christians. Some of us are very drowsy candidates for amaranthine crowns. There are stains on our white robes; the shield of our faith is rent and broken; the sword of the spirit is dashed many a time from the nerveless arms. But these who have given their very hearts to Christ, through the faith of Christ have the righteousness which is of God by faith; and know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and something, at least, of the fellowship of His sufferings, and therefore something also of the fellowship of His glory. These

are, indeed, the saints that are in the earth and they that excel in virtue.

v. Yet there is a step higher. It is that sense of the word faith which is its special meaning in St Paul—the faith which absolutely justifies—even that mystic union with Christ, of which we have been speaking as the life in Christ. And here, on the topmost rounds of the golden ladder, the saint becomes the perfect saint, and we almost lose sight of him in the melting glow of light. Then indeed to him to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Then indeed Christ lives in him; and the life he now lives, is lived by faith in the Son of God. Then indeed his life is hid with Christ in God. To such a saint any contrast between faith and works is ludicrous; for faith and works are one, and works as necessarily accompany his faith as heat does the fire, or light the sun. Joined to his Lord, in one spirit with Him, transformed by the renewing of his mind, he is dead to sin and shame. His life has become a living impulse of God. Christ has passed into his will. All his life may now be expressed by those words of Christian perfectness—"faith which worketh by love"; for in him faith has passed from receptivity into energy; from passive submission into spontaneous force. This is truest sainthood; it is justification ripened into sanctification; it is faith which has passed into holiness. Such an one, however bruised and battered

by the world's miseries and persecutions, yet believing rejoices with joy unspeakable, and full of glory, receiving the end of his faith, even the salvation of his soul.

5. Do some of you feel very far from such a glorious consummation? Victims of habitual sin; slaves of transient and worldly ends; steeped in dull plenitude of comfort; absorbed in mean personal money-getting; amused mainly by wretched social gossip, and not blushing to be interested in its prurience or its malice; eating and drinking, for to-morrow, as you think, you die, not knowing that in God's sight you are dead already in ail but the beating of the heart; walking in the flesh, not in the spirit;—do any of you feel that you are very far separated by gulfs of thought and aim and habit from the very humblest of the saints of God? Ah! my brethren, though not saints, we are all called to be saints; and this is the will of God, even our sanctification. This change must take place in you; you must become other than you are; otherwise, though you were rich as Cræsus and great as Cæsar, your life is a failure, awful and ruinous; not life, but living death. To live, you too must try to climb this golden ladder by faith unto faith. It is by faith only, and the prayer of faith, and the holy communion with Christ by faith, that you can climb from the death and misery of pride and selfishness and

sensuality, to be humble and pure and unselfish, and full of Christlike love. This you must do; this you can do; for as St. Catharine of Siena said upon her deathbed, there is no one, however sinful, who may not amend his life. Oh! will you not begin to amend your life, begin the life of faith to-day, by breathing forth from your inmost heart the prayer of the publican—"God, be merciful to me the sinner"?

6. For, lastly, if any sinful and worldly person here does not and will not amend, or seek God by faith, or even begin to aim at the life in Christ, or put his foot on even the lowest round of the heavenward ladder, then we cannot promise him either a noble or a happy life. Not a noble life certainly; for it is by faith, and faith only, that men have ever done noble deeds, have removed mountains, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire; by faith only that martyrs have faced death; and hermits resigned the world: and crusaders yielded their pure souls to Christ on Syrian battlefields; and reformers wrestled with the powers of darkness; and statesmen bearded prejudice, and abhorred the sacrifice of patriotism to party, or righteousness to expediency, and smitten the hydra heads of selfishness and crime. Men have eaten and drunk and died, for generations, in sin and meanness, and in low vulgar aims. Yes, men have died, "some with

lives that came to nothing, some with deeds as well undone," and worms have eaten them. But it was by faith that Paul converted the Gentiles, and Telemachus stopped the shows of gladiators, and Athanasius stood alone against the world; it was by faith that Wycliffe translated the Bible, and Luther reformed Europe, and Cranmer burnt his offending right hand in the flame. It was by faith that Wesley awoke a slumbering England, and Howard reformed prisons, and Wilberforce set free the slave. It was by faith that Livingstone traversed the wilds of Africa, and Mathew reformed the drunkard, and Martyn preached to the Hindoo.

And it is by faith that thousands of God's children now are bearing privation, or facing obloquy, or wrestling against the powers of sin. It is by faith that the tradesman prefers God to gold, and the young man tramples on his passions, and the young woman devotes her life to doing good. No! God does not promise you a noble life without faith; for in faith lies the mainspring of all true nobleness. And still less can He promise you a happy life. For a life of sin is not (you know it well), and cannot be, a happy life; and whatsoever is not of faith is sin. If man reject the power and grace which God offers him, he cannot, by his own unaided power, make the great choice for peace of soul rather than joys of sense. For Christ's voice is a still small voice:

and is but as the breath of evening in the garden at the cool of day ; and when man deafens his ear thereto, the voices of the passions are sweet as the songs of sirens ; and the peal of ambition stirring as a clarion's note ; and the glitter of dull gold gleams more brightly than the stars of heaven to the downward eye ; and if you have no faith, nor seek it, you will therefore live the life of sin, and the life of sin is the life of baseness and of misery. But oh, thou--be thou servant, or clerk, or artisan, or statesman, or poor woman, or professional man, or who thou wilt--climb thou, and fear not to climb, this ladder Godwards, Christwards, Heavenwards--from faith unto faith. And then I tell thee, in the name of the Lord, that both happy and noble shall be thy life. Noble it shall be--however obscure, however poor--for every life is noble which attains the end of the commandment, which is love out of a pure heart, and a good conscience and faith unfeigned ; and every life is happy, which, it may be after fierce struggles, has attained to peace in victory.

This is the certain experience of all true saints ; that, when once a man, by faith, has refused any longer to pluck the fruit of death in the realm of darkness ; when, by resolute prayer and effort, he has broken down every bridge behind him which could lead him back to shame ; when he has offered cheerfully to God

all that he possesses, all that he was, all that he is, and drowned his guilty past in a hallowed forgetfulness ; then indeed for him true freedom, true happiness, begins. Then, and not till then, the slave can forget his fetters, and the fury vanish from the sinner's breast. For such souls the law has lost its terrors ; unmenaced by the burning crags of Sinai, they can sit in calm among the lilies on the green mountain of Beatitudes. The menace of the deathful ordinance has vanished with man's defiance of it ; that menace is for shrinking slaves, not for dear sons. A child of God has no more the spirit of fear and torment, but God has sent forth the spirit of His Son into his heart, crying, *Abba, Father*. And why ? because he has made God's will *his* will, and therefore God has come down to him from the awful throne of the universe to abide with him for evermore. This, dear brethren, may be the blessedness of every one of you. You are not worse sinners than those Gentiles to whom St. Paul wrote, once steeped in guilt, but afterwards elect of God. You are called, as they were called ; and of them it is written that "whom He called, them He also justified ; and whom He justified, them He also glorified."

The one is man that shall hereafter be ;

The other man as sin has made him now.

From faith to faith ; from strength to strength ;

from glory to glory ; it is a golden ladder from sin to holiness, from death to life, from earth to heaven ; it is a golden chain of which one end is in the heart of man, but the other is in the hand of God in Christ.

The Ideal and the Real in Christianity.

"Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect but I press on, if so be that I may apprehend that for which also I was apprehended by Christ Jesus."—PHIL. iii. 12.

AL. Scripture tells us of Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained; of the universality of sin, and the universality of grace; of mankind ruined in Adam, and saved in Christ. These truths form an epitome of human history in four periods, summed up in four words--Ignorance, Promise, Law, Grace; and in four names--Adam, Abraham, Moses, Christ. Mankind has fallen in Adam under the law of sin and death; and the law of Moses, so far from being a remedy, did but threaten death, and bring sin into fuller consciousness. To Abraham came the promise, and by his faith he became the father of the faithful. That promise was fulfilled in Christ. All have sinned. We have sinned. That sin involved past guilt, present helplessness, future dread. The law was powerless to save us. We are powerless to save

ourselves. But Christ has saved us. The means as regards God we know not; the fact as regards man we know. By His death He paid the ransom for our sins; by His life He becomes our righteousness. If we be true Christians, He is in us, and we in Him. "Save me from a bad man, even from myself," was the cry of St. Augustine: and we can only be saved from ourselves, by being "in Christ." All the New Testament, as I showed you, is full of this union with, this abiding in Christ, and we can attain to it by faith alone. We have gazed on the golden rounds of that ladder from faith to faith; from unbelief, and dead belief, to faith in God; to faith in Christ; to faith in the redeeming blood of Christ; to faith touched by spiritual emotion; to faith becoming a self-surrender of the will; to faith which has ascended into mystic incorporation with Christ; to faith which vanishes away into the perfectness of truth and love, in spiritual unity with the will of God. And when we understand "faith" in this its fullest sense, we can better grasp the meaning of St. Paul's Gospel and the deeper meaning which he read into the words of Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith."

2. We will now consider how this Gospel corresponds with the state of the world around us—with the facts of our own lives. Alas! might it not well seem, at the first glance, as if, in rude

contrast with daily life, all this splendid ideal melted away like a grotto of icicles ; vanished like the unsubstantial fabric of a dream ?

i. We will not look at the vast masses of society, whether rich or poor, who—though they may profess and call themselves Christians ; though they were baptized ; though they have the form of godliness—yet, denying its power, walk openly after the flesh ; follow professedly their own hearts' lusts ; do not keep God in their thoughts ; neglect His worship ; profane His name ; despise His sacraments ; contemptuously fling aside and deliberately violate His law. Grievous it is that now, as of old, the world should lie in wickedness ; and that myriads, on all sides, everywhere, should be followers of gold and of pleasure, not followers of God ; votaries, more or less defiantly, of sin ; to whom Christ is nothing and God a name. But if St. Paul never contemplated such characters as these ; if these be as the heathen in all but name, shall we not see the reality of St. Paul's language by looking at the Church ? Surely in the Church, surely in its individual members, we shall see some relation between the ideal of that which ought to be and the reality of that which is ?

ii. How exquisite, for instance, in its ideal beauty is the picture of the Christian Church ; the Israel of God : the Church of the firstborn ; the children of the promise ! How beautiful is

she in her unity—one body, one spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in us all! How beautiful is she in her brotherhood, in her good works, in her labour of beneficence, in the faith of her individual members radiated into the one burning focus of love, and radiating from that focus over all the world! Grace is shed abundantly upon her, and joy amid much affliction, and peace amid surrounding agitations. She is the Vine of Christ, rich with her purple fruitage; the husbandry of God, waving with harvests of hundredfold—a heavenly Temple, bright with gold and precious stones. She is the virgin, Bride of Christ, a king's daughter, all glorious within, her clothing of wrought gold, clad in the fine linen white and clean which is the righteousness of the saints. Does she not stand as in the Apocalypse, clothed with the sun and with the crescent moon beneath her feet amid the stars? Is she not like some great angel whose wings of love and purity winnow the crimson dawn of the Sun of Righteousness as He rises upon a better day? That is the ideal; what has been the real? Do we see it in the Church of the fourth century, deeply sunk in Arianism, rent with furious controversies, sanguinary with contending factions, when Athanasius stood alone against the world? Do we see it in the Church of the tenth century, slumbering

in the almost unbroken midnight of ignorance and will-worship? Do we see it in the Church of the fifteenth century—so gorgeous and so godless—

the abhorred form,

Whose scarlet robe was stiff with earthly pomp,

Who drank iniquity from cups of gold,

Whose names were many and all blasphemous?

Do we see it in the Church of the sixteenth century, when the priest turned atheist, and became utterly corrupt in high places? Do we see it in the Church of the eighteenth century, with its torpor and worldliness and greed? Alas! when do we see it? Did even the Apostles see it? Did Paul, who painted that bright ideal, see it realized among the Galatians, biting and devouring one another; or in Colossae, the prey of dreamy speculations; or in Ephesus, where the doctrines of Phyggeus and Hermogenes ate as a canker; or in Rome, where some preached Christ even of contention, hoping to add affliction to his bonds? And what shall we say of Corinth—that Church of the saints which stands as the warning to all ages—the Church which rang with the shibboleths of party; where some denied the Resurrection; where they did not blush to leave a gross offender unreprieved; where their holy Apostle was calumniated and abused; where women harangued barchaded in public; where the strong despised the weak, and

the weak condemned the strong ; where worship became the noisy arena of conflicting selfishnesses ; where gluttony and drunkenness profaned and degraded even the Supper of the Lord ? And alas ! is there nothing amongst us now to show that well-nigh nineteen Christian centuries have not yet developed the perfectness of the Church of Christ ? Have we no factions ? no party-names ? no wilful disturbances of the calm and sanctity of worship ? no violent cabals ? no mean intrigues ? Ah !, must we not confess that the new Jerusalem, as we witness it, is no more exempt from corruption than was the old ? That early Christian poet who saw it descending in incorruptible purity out of heaven from God, saw that which perhaps for a moment of time was almost realized, that which may be realized again. But what we see in history behind us, and in the world about us, is, it must be confessed, not "like a bride adorned for her husband." We see something that is admirable, and much that is great and wonderful, but not "this splendour of maiden purity." The orange-flower is faded, the bridal dress is rent.

·ii. We turn then, with something of sadness, from the Church to the individual. Perhaps it will be better there. The branch may bear grapes, though the vine be feeble ; though there be dross in the community, the single heart may be of gold. For is not the true Christian a new crea-

tion in Christ? does he not walk in the spirit? is he not dead to sin? is he not regenerate? have not old things passed away? has he not crucified with Christ his old dead self? has he not risen with Christ? and now, counting all worldly things as dust, does he not seek those things which are above? is he not Christ's freed man; free from the law of sin and death; having cast away the works of darkness; bringing forth the fruit of light? Does he not stand, the happy warrior, victorious over his evil passions; victorious over the seductions of the world; gleaming in his armour of righteousness, - the shield of faith upon his arm, the sword of the Spirit in his strong right hand? His lips are full of grace; his heart of peace; his acts of love.

Envy and calumny, and hate and pain,
And that unrest which men miscall delight,
Can touch him not, nor torture Him again,
From the contagion of the world's slow stain
He is secure, nor evermore shall mourn
A heart grown cold, a head grown grey in vain.

His path is as the shining light, shining more unto the perfect day; "even in its waning lustre becoming lovelier every hour; having a sublimer faith, a brighter hope, a kinder sympathy, a gentler resignation."

2. That is the beautiful ideal; again, I ask, do we see it realized around us? do we see even an approach to its realization in our own hearts

and lives? We see, thank God, many men who are honourable; some who are good; a few who are holy; one or two who are saintly; but, even among professing Christians, do we not see thousands who are terribly, terribly imperfect; myriads who are false every day, and every hour, to the inmost meaning of their name? My brethren, the follies, the inconsistencies, the sins of Christians, are but too fruitful a theme. Can a Christian be a churl? can he hate his brother? can he cheat in trade? can he be a drunkard? can he be impure? can he make gold his god? can he be guilty of mean conduct and false words? As we look round us and within us, are we not sometimes almost forced to say with David "all men are liars"; and with that sad king of the Idylls

I found God in the shining of the stars,
I marked Him in the flowering of His fields;
But in His ways with men I find Him not.

I need not dwell on this. Your own hearts will answer. We all know how far short we fall; we all see that the ideal is as the perfect poetry of life, and the real its hard and halting prose; that the ideal is as the blue of the distant hills, and the real as their scarred and barren sides; that the ideal is a splendid noon, and the real too often the dim disastrous twilight of a cloudy day.

3. My friends, if these things are so; if the

ideal be indeed as glorious as I have been trying to show; and if I have hardly even needed to prove what our own consciences prove sufficiently, how awfully we fall short of it—what are we to think? It is a very important question; I can but touch for a few moments on the answer. Some have given up the ideal altogether. "Ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God," says St. Paul. "This is the language of ecstasy, not the language of this working-day world," writes one in comment on the text. Others deny that any of us really believe the ideal, or in any way try to attain it; and more than one book has been written with the title "Are we Christians?" Others ignorantly and self-deceivingly think that by repeating the formula "I accept Christ," they spring to the heights of the ideal all at once. I hold all three views to be errors. The ideal is divinely true, divinely precious: it is earth's most precious heritage; it is redemption and sanctification; it is the life in Christ, and we have not attained to it; but oh! it has been, it is being attained, and, if we be faithful, it shall be attained yet more, both for us, and for the world:

4. Look, for instance again, at the ideal of the Church. She has been strack, we admit, with the fiery darts of her enemies; she has been wounded, yet more grievously, in the house of her friends; the blood of defeat has flowed over

her golden armour; the dust of the desert is on her virgin robe. And yet she has done—with all her faults and all her feuds, she is doing—in the world a glorious work. She has been the converter of the nations; the protector of the oppressed; the champion of the weak; the teacher of the ignorant; the emancipator of the slave. The last word of Stoicism was suicide; the last word of Christianity is hope. Philosophy despised man's nature, and despaired of it; Christianity believes in and has ennobled it. "Philosophy," wrote Voltaire, "was never meant for the people. The canaille of to-day resembles in everything the canaille of the last four thousand years. We have never cared to enlighten cobblers and maid-servants. That is the work of Apostles." Yes! glorious eulogy, meant to be a bitter sneer; to enlighten cobblers and maid-servants, ay, and even publicans and sinners, that is the work of Apostles, for it was the work of Christ. In all ages it has been the glory of the Church of Christ to honour and to reverence man as man—to inspire men with the dignity of that nature which they share, and of the society in the midst of which they move; to preach the Gospel to the poor. We confess with sorrow the shortcomings of the Church in every age; but they who best know ecclesiastical history will not fail to see that, even in the seasons of her deepest degradation, the Church was still the regenerator of society;

the upholder of principle against selfish interest ; the visible witness of the invisible God. They will thankfully confess that, notwithstanding the selfishness and dishonour of individual rulers, notwithstanding the imperfections and errors of special institutions, yet, in her continuous history, the Divine promise has been signally fulfilled : " Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world." She stands, it has been said, not like the triumphant Archangel of the great Italian picture, with fair brow, with smooth wings, with azure vest ; but though her wings have been ruffled, her armour soiled, her robe rent, her sword broken to the hilt - she still, like the legendary saint of St. Margaret's Church - she tramples on the conquered foe.

5. And perhaps the thought may make us turn with less despair to our own case, the case of the individual. Let us admit from our hearts that we are unprofitable servants, lost sheep, faithless soldiers. St. Paul himself was forced to do this. He counted not himself to have attained. After all his severe self-discipline, he still saw a law in his members warring against the law of his mind. He called himself, not only the least of the Apostles, but even the chief of sinners. And yet he knew that the foundation of God stood sure, having this seal : " The Lord knoweth them that are His ;" and, " Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity." And

therefore, 'in spite of all discouragements from without and from within, he did what we must do, my brethren—he still believed in the ideal; he still strove after it.

i. He still believed in the ideal. He was not disenchanted by failure. He was not made a deserter by defeat. They who are "in Christ" may still be weak, and most unworthy; and may give occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme; but, for all that, there are good men, and there are saints. There is a difference—a deep radical difference—between him who has, and him who has not, faith. The life of the good man may be poor and weak and feeble, and he may often sink into wrong deeds and mistaken thoughts, and yet he will be aiming at sincerity and at justice; and at purity both of thought and deed; and at peace and love, in all their soft and lovely shades of gentleness and humility. If his renewal be as yet ever so far from perfect, still his is a new life—new in its principle; new in its tendency; new in its acts. The sinner passionately loves his sin even when he cannot indulge it; but the good man loves the good with all his heart though he have not attained to do it, and hates the evil into which by temptation he may have been drawn. In the weakest sincere Christian there is that predominant sincerity, and desire of holy walking, according to which

he is called a righteous person; the Lord is pleased to give him that name, and account him so, because he is upright in heart, though he often fails. He says humbly to his God—"I have been careless, cowardly, sometimes all but mutinous; but a traitor I have never been, a deserter I have never been. I have not been good, but I have at least tried to be good. I have not done good, it may be, either; but I have at least tried to do good. Strike not my unworthy name off the roll-call of the noble army, though I stand the lowest and the last upon the list."

ii. And so, still believing in the ideal, let us strive after it. Do not let us be pessimists even in judging of ourselves. Speaking of a country village, a great writer says that "life looked there at first like a dismal mixture of griping worldliness and vanity and drink; but looking closer you found some purity, gentleness, unselfishness, as you may have seen some scented geranium giving forth its wholesome odour amid blasphemy and gin." Oh, if there be evil in us, there is also good in us; and He who causes the delicate white blossom of the water-lily to breathe forth its immaculate sweetness, though its roots be in the river mud, can draw beauty and sweetness even out of such hearts as ours. It is His to save; it is ours to come to Him for salvation. Though we fail—though we fail seven times a day—yet let us never despair, never cease to try. God's promise

is sure : and, if we strive, in faith and prayer, He will at last beat down Satan under our feet. It is not His way to do things by halves. He will not, for His love is infinite—He will not be tired of pardoning the returning prodigal.

“ Oh God, how long ?
Put forth indeed Thy powerful right hand
While time is yet,
Or never shall I reach the blissful land ! ”
Thus I. Then God, in pleasant speech and strong
(Which soon I shall forget),
“ The man who, though his fights be all defeats,
Still fights,
Fights at last
The heavenly Jerusalem’s rejoicing streets,
With glory more, and more triumphant rites,
Than always-conquering Joshua’s, when his blast
The frightened walls of Jericho down cast ;
And lo ! the glad surprise
Of peace beyond surmise,
More than in common Saints, for ever in his eyes ! ”

Yes, my brethren, cease not to aim at the glorious ideal of the life “ in Christ ” ; cease not to strive after Him from faith to faith. For none who have tried have ever found the method fail ; and none have ever succeeded who trusted only in their own strength. The promise is for you—however guilty you have been, however abject you may be now. “ Though ye have lien among the pots, yet shall ye be as the wings of a dove, that is covered with silver wings, and her feathers like gold.”

Three Christmas Carols.

[I have so often been asked for permission to use the four carols which follow, that I print them here. The first has been set to music by Mr. John Farmer, of Hurrow; the three others by Dr. Bridge, of Westminster.]

IN THE FIELD WITH THEIR FLOCKS ABIDING.

In the field with their flocks abiding,
They lay on the dewy ground;
And glimmering under the starlight
The sheep lay white around.
When the Light of the Lord streamed o'er them,
And lo! from the heaven above
An angel leaned from the glory,
And sang his song of love:—
He sang that first sweet Christmas,
The song that shall never cease
“Glory to God in the highest,
On earth good-will and peace.”

"To you, in the City of David,
 A Saviour is born to-day!"
 And sudden a host of the Heavenly ones
 Flashed forth to join the lay.
 O never hath sweeter message
 Thrilled home to the souls of men,
 And the heavens themselves had never heard
 A gladder choir till then
 For they sang that Christmas carol
 That never on earth shall cease -
 "Glory to God in the highest,
 On earth good will and peace."

And the shepherds came to the manger,
 And gazed on the Holy Child,
 And calmly o'er that rude cradle
 The Virgin Mother smiled:
 And the sky, in the starlit silence,
 Seemed full of the angel lay
 "To you, in the City of David,
 A Saviour is born to day;"
 Oh, they sang - and I ween that never,
 That carol on earth shall cease
 "Glory to God in the highest,
 On earth good will and peace."

IN SORROW AND IN WANT.

In sorrow and in want,
 Amid the winter wild,
 The Mother Maid, in Bethlehem's inn,
 Brought forth her first-born Child.
 Be glad, ye humble souls,
 Sing songs upon your way;
 With heart and voice rejoice, rejoice,
 Your Lord is born to-day!
 Your Lord is born to-day
 To-day in love for you,
 The choirs of Heav'n are sounding forth,
 Their joyous Hallelu!

For Him the shepherd band
 Have left their lonely fold:
 The star led worshippers for Him
 Bring incense, myrrh and gold.
 For Him the midnight skies
 Flash forth with angel wings,
 That little Babe in manger laid
 He is the King of kings!
 He is the King of kings!
 He came, He came to save!
 Where is thy sting, O bitter Death?
 Thy victory, O Grave?

He came with royal grace,
 His choicest gifts to give.
 In tenderness of love He came
 To teach our souls to live.

He came in lowly grief
 To suffer and to die,
 That we might rise from sin and death,
 To live with Him on high.
 To live with Him on high.
 In realms of light above,
 And join the souls His cross hath saved
 In hymns of endless love.

Low lies Thy cradled Head,
 Thou blessed Child Divine ;
 The wreath of thorns must twine around
 That tender brow of Thine !
 But love, and life and home,
 Through Thee are dearer far,
 And lives of mortal men may be
 As pure as angels are.
 As pure as angels are ;
 Then join their angel lay,
 With heart and voice rejoice, rejoice,
 Your Lord is born to-day !

ALL JUBILANT WITH PSALM AND HYMN.

ALL jubilant with psalm and hymn
 Around the Throne they stand,
 Heaven's Cherubim and Seraphim
 Encrowned and harp in hand.

THREE CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

Unfold, unfold, ye gates of gold,
The fight shall now be won !
He Who by Prophets spake of old
Now sends His only Son.
Glory to God in the Highest be
Now and for all eternity ;
“ Peace, peace on earth,” they sang.
And swelled the strain again :
And all the starry welkin rang
“ Good will, good-will to men.”

And one his golden cithern took,
And spread his radiant wings,
And with such fiery rapture strook
The wild and warbling strings,
That all his wond’ring brethren cried,
“ Our herald thou shalt shine
On this eternal Christmas-tide
To lead our song divine.”
Glory to God, &c.

“
Then backward sprang the golden doors,
On that resplendent morn,
And Jesus left Heaven’s azure floors
To be the Virgin-born ;
And while our little planet-star
Through its blue ether rolls,
Those Angel notes shall blend afar
With songs of ransomed souls.
Glory to God, &c.

An Easter Carol.

Ox the Cross we saw Him dying,
Saw Him mid the spices lying,
Saw the nail prints, and the spear wound, as we laid
Him in the tomb :
And we wept in anguish weary
Through the Sabbath dim and dreary,
And our souls were heavy laden with the horror and
the gloom.

Oh the rush of joy returning !
Oh our hearts within us burning
Very early in the morning, at the rosy dawn of day !
Is it true, Oh starry Angel
Herald of the great Evangel ?
Mary, Peter, Holy Women—did ye see Him as ye
saw ?

Yea, we saw Him with us walking,
Heard Him in the twilight talking,
Saw Him by the grassy margin of the misty silver
sea :
Saw Him --we, the loved Eleven,
Gathered in the solemn Even,
Saw Him--the five hundred brethren on the hill of
Galilee.

Christ is risen ! He is risen !
He hath left the rocky prison,
And the white robed Angels glimmer mid the cere-
ments of His grave ;
He hath smitten with His thunder
Every gate of brass asunder,
He hath burst the iron fetters - irresistible to save ! *

Oh the gladness and the glory
Of the blessed Easter story !
Oh the quick electric thrilling of the Pentecostal
flame !
Death of death, of life the Giver,
Reign, oh Victor King, for ever !
Howly we Thy sons adore Thee ! Glory, Glory to
Thy Name !

